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The Lands and Peoples Series

GREECE

*The Lands and Peoples Series*

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EPIAVTRUS: THE ANCIENT THEATRE.

THE LANDS AND PEOPLES SERIES

*The Land and People of*  
**GREECE**

*by*

FRANCIS NOEL-BAKER

WITH TWENTY-THREE PHOTOGRAPHS  
AND A MAP

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

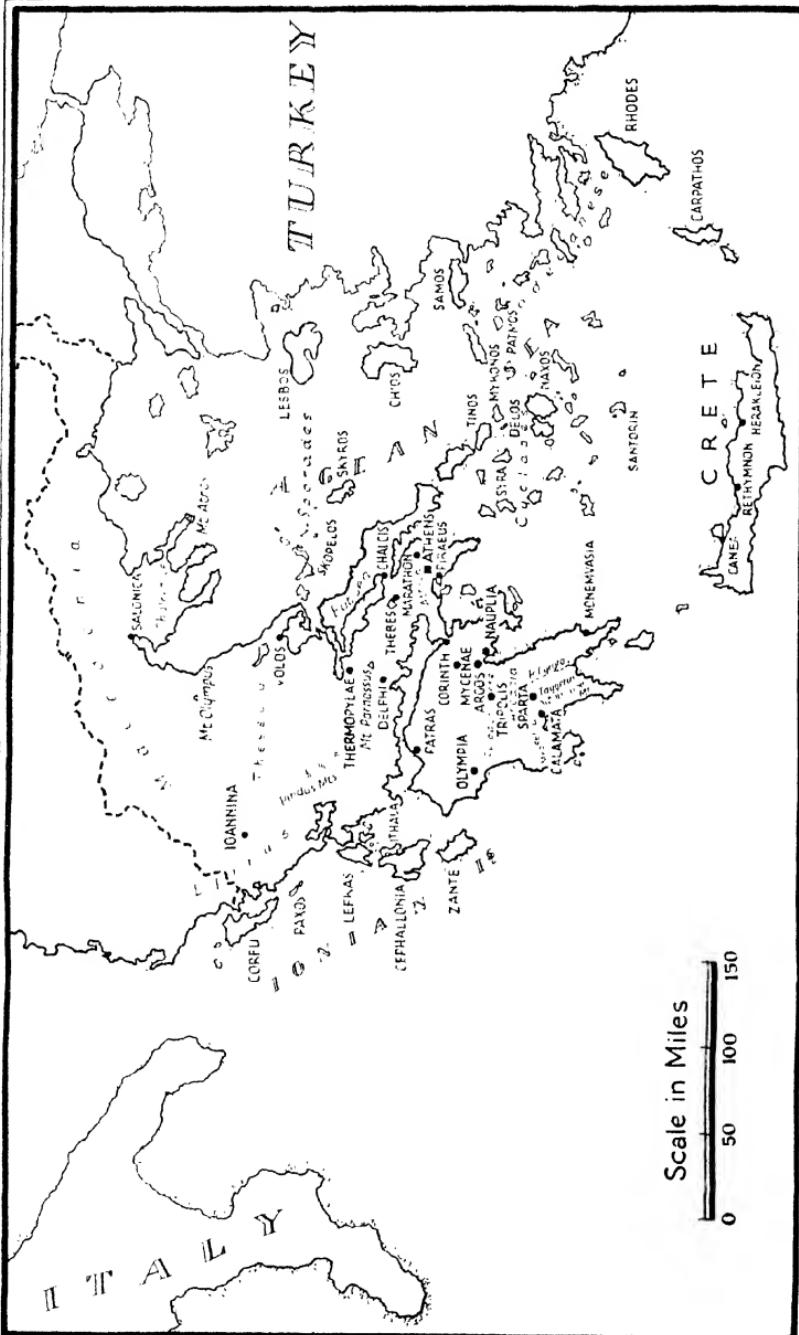
In spelling Greek names in the pages that follow, I have used the version (usually the classical version) which is best known in England.

I wish to record my gratitude to Mr. James Harding for his invaluable assistance in the preparation of this book.

F.N.B.

London, *June* 1956

# T U R K E Y



## I

## THE LAND OF GREECE

GREECE is a country whose influence on the rest of the world has been immense. Her ancient peoples made discoveries in thought, art, government and science which have shaped our ideas ever since. Our own philosophy, culture and laws are still based largely on Greek models, and the wonderful literature which the Greeks created has been an inspiration to generation after generation of our writers and poets. Even our language is full of Greek: *astronomy, athletics, democracy, drama, geometry, mathematics, philosophy, poetry*. . . . When we say "the Greeks had a word for it" we are paying a tribute to a brilliant and many-sided people to whom other nations have every reason to be grateful.

Yet Greece is a small country: only half the size of Great Britain. It is partly an island nation, too, though most of its land stretches down to the sea from the continent of Europe, and shares a frontier with four other Balkan countries. A glance at the map shows the mainland broken by countless bays and gulfs. Scattered among the surrounding seas are hundreds of islands, large and small: Crete and Euboea, the Dodecanese and Cyclades and Ionian groups and many others. Mainland and islands together, modern Greece covers an area of just over 50,000 square miles.

The long, winding coastline brings the sea within a few hours' journey of almost every town and

village. So it is not surprising that many Greeks are sailors. They owe much of their wealth to their ships both in home waters and on the high seas of the world.

Ask a traveller his first memory of Greece, and he will most likely say "sea and mountains". Though the mountains are not very high (Olympus, the highest, is less than 10,000 feet) they are almost never out of sight. The Pindus range, with many offshoots, is the backbone of the mainland; the great Peninsula of the Peloponnese is dominated by wild, bare mountains, and Crete has rocky peaks which are snow-capped all the year. Many of the smaller islands, too, are hilly.

The capital of Greece is Athens: once the world's chief centre of learning, beauty and civilisation, and now a busy, modern city. In the centre the visitor can see wide avenues and big new buildings, smart shops, restaurants and hotels. Farther out are more modest streets of pleasant stuccoed, red-tiled houses running like furrows from the lower slopes of Mount Lycabettus and of the Acropolis hill out into the surrounding plain. Near by, and almost joining Athens, is the big, bustling port of Piraeus, making the combined population of the two cities well over a million.

Other large towns are Salonica—whose citizens call it the "Northern Capital"—and Patras in the Peloponnese. But the rest are much smaller, and it is estimated that before the war there were only twenty towns with a population of more than twenty thousand. Even to-day the whole population of the whole of Greece, including the islands, is less than that of Greater London.

There is an old story that when God created the world He put the earth through a sieve, scattering the good soil here and there and casting the stones over His shoulder. The spot where the stones landed, say the Greeks ruefully, was Greece. And in fact only one-fifth of their land is fit for cultivation, the rest being either bare rock, forest or scrub. The lack of natural pasture means that the Greeks cannot keep many cattle, and the most important animals are therefore sheep and goats. Without them Greece would not have enough milk or cheese, and they are practically the only source of meat and wool.

Greece is what is known as a “peasant country”. In most districts, the peasant owns his own plot of land, large or small, which he cultivates as best he can, with the help of his family and a few animals. He grows just about enough to feed himself and them. Often his land is only a few acres, including some olive trees, a little vineyard and a piece of grazing for his mule or donkey and his oxen. It must be intensively cultivated if the best use is to be made of it. Agriculture occupies more than half the population of Greece. Agricultural machinery is often still primitive and some farmers still use the simple tools that were employed by generations before them.

In some areas the pine forests on the mountains provide timber, pit props and resin, and charcoal is made from the wood and roots of the bushes and scrub on the foothills. But elsewhere forest fires and goats (which eat down tender young trees) have left the hillsides bare and rocky.

Since the nineteen-twenties the Greeks have

begun to develop their industries. Some of the most important are concerned with food: flour, milling, canning, fruit packing and so on. There are big textile mills and chemical works, too, as well as tobacco factories and mines which produce a variety of important minerals. But the fuels needed to run most of the factories—petrol, oil and coal—have to be imported, and although several new power stations were built in the nineteen-fifties, Greece is still very short of electric power. In the end, it is on the peasants that her prosperity chiefly depends.

For the traveller the countryside of Greece is beautiful, varied and full of interest. In the Peloponnes, the great Southern Peninsula, the fertile Messenian plains abound in mulberry trees, vineyards and olive groves. The peasants grow currant-grapes, figs, dates and oranges, which reach Britain and other countries by way of Patras on the Gulf of Corinth. (Corinth, incidentally, gives us our word “currant”.) Near by is Sparta, whose citizens of old were famous for their courage and manliness, and the fascinating ruined Byzantine city of Mistra.

Central Greece, now as in the past, is the most important part of the country, with Athens and Piraeus, at the southern end of the plain of Attica, combining to form the main centre of government and commerce. For miles around the traveller can admire the dominating rock of the Acropolis, once the fortress of ancient Athens, majestically outlined against the purple mountainside of Hymettus. In the Attic plain itself are some of the best vineyards and oldest olive groves in the country.

Vineyards and olive groves, too, as well as

tobacco plantations, grow in the fertile plains which intersect the Pindus mountains. On the lower slopes of Mount Parnassus is the town of Delphi, once the site of a temple of Apollo and of a famous oracle to which ancient Greeks came from near and far in the hope of learning what the future held in store for them. The range of mountains that separates the plain of Attica from the plain of Boeotia includes Mount Helicon, on which was built a sacred temple to the Muses.

The Pindus Mountains run north from Central Greece with the wide, rich plains of Thessaly on the one side and the heights of Epirus on the other. Majestic forests of oak and pine cluster on the higher slopes. Here in the Pindus the traveller must often make his way as best he can by pack-mule or on foot; there are few main roads and the sea is far away. Wandering shepherds with their families and flocks roam the mountain passes in search of pasture. The climate, too, is harsher. In the north towers Mount Olympus, sacred home of the ancient gods, its summit often veiled in mist. The great mountain seems to change colour with the time of day, and always looks mysterious and a little awe-inspiring.

The coastline of Epirus is bleak and rugged. This remote region is inhabited by a proud, fiercely independent people who win a hard-earned living from their flocks and scanty fields. Like all mountaineers, they are tough fighters.

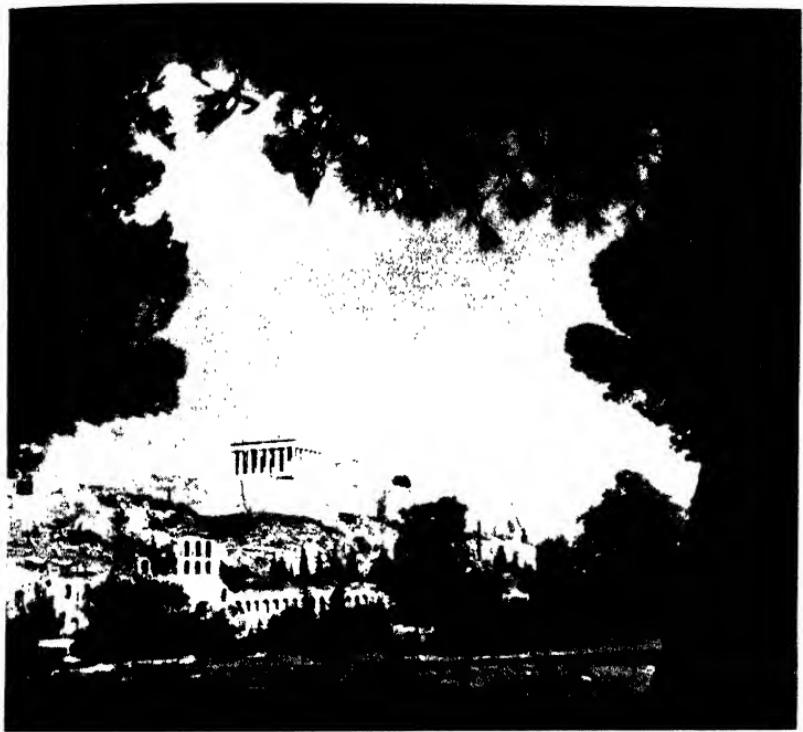
Farther north, Macedonia, a province about twice as big as Wales, is chiefly famous for its tobacco. Many of what we know as "Turkish" and "Egyptian" cigarettes are made from tobacco

grown here: until 1902 Macedonia belonged to the old Turkish Empire. Besides tobacco, the Macedonians also grow cotton and grain and work on silk-farms. Salonica, Macedonia's chief city, is a lively seaport with less charm than Athens but much the same contrast of old and new. Mount Athos, on the peninsula of near-by Chalcidice, is a strange self-contained republic run entirely by monks, which is described in more detail in Chapter IX.

The islands round Greece have throughout the ages inspired the world's greatest poets. Unfortunately earthquakes have lately caused much devastation among the Ionian Islands, particularly Zante, but even so they are still among the loveliest parts of Greece. Fruitful orchards and flourishing olive groves bring prosperity, and tourists come here in thousands to bask in the sunshine or bathe in the dazzling blue sea.

Chief among the Dodecanese (the name actually means "Twelve Islands") is Rhodes, once the site of the famous Colossus, a gigantic bronze statue straddling the ancient harbour entrances, which was destroyed by an earthquake many centuries ago. Here bloom exquisite roses and beautiful gardens in a wonderful climate. Other islands in this group are mostly rocky and bare with a population of peasants, fishermen and sponge-divers who live in white, box-like little houses nestling closely together on the hillsides. In the distance loom the snowy mountain peaks of the Turkish mainland.

Crete is the largest Greek island and the fifth largest in the whole Mediterranean. It was here



ATHENS: THE PARTHENON



THE PROPYLAEA: GATEWAY TO THE AGROPOLIS



that Greek civilisation first began and there are still many graceful remains of former greatness, notably the fabulous Palace of King Minos at Knossos. The island is dominated by high, wild mountains. The people of the valleys work in olive groves, vineyards and vegetable gardens, while the mountaineers can boast an ancestry reaching back to earliest times and can claim that no foreign conqueror ever quite subdued them.

Although mainland Greece is a very mountainous country, travelling has steadily become easier in recent years. A main-line railway links Athens and Salonica with the rest of Europe, and a separate railway system serves the Peloponnese. There are good main roads linking the bigger towns. Among the islands, small but fast passenger ships, caiques and motor launches run frequent services, and an efficient Greek airways system covers much of the country.

Most people think of Greece as a hot country—and so it is compared to Britain. But in winter parts of Greece can also be extremely cold. This is due both to the shape and position of the country and to the mountains. Winds sweeping in from the Mediterranean or the Balkans cause sudden changes in the weather. Spring begins with a hot March sun and the blossoming of the almond trees. The landscape takes on sharp outlines and stands out with vivid clearness. Distant mountains look deceptively near and one can see the details of rocks and trees from many miles away. Then, quite suddenly, spring is over. The sun beats down, bathing the country in a fierce white light, blurring the view with heat-haze. Shepherds drive their

flocks higher up the mountains hoping to find green grass, for by now many of the river beds are dry and the lower slopes are sere and brown. In high summer there is little activity out of doors, especially in the middle of the day, when the temperature reaches ninety in the shade, and people go home and put up shutters to keep out the sun's strong glare. Then, late in October, autumn tints the countryside with reds and yellows before the leaves begin to fall. But the weather often stays sunny and warm—warm enough to swim—until after New Year's Day. The snow usually comes between mid-January and March and is melted on all but the highest mountain-tops by the end of April.

For all the changes and troubles of recent years, Greece remains a timeless and beautiful country. On the lonely, rugged hillside sits a shepherd, his flock wandering here and there cropping the parched earth. Over the breeze comes a tinkle of goat-bells and the chirrup of crickets. Close by are the graceful columns of a ruined temple. In the distance, below the mountains, the sea sparkles in the sunshine.

Here you find the eternal Hellas, where the values and beauty of a great classical past are strong and vivid as they were twenty-five centuries ago.

## II

## THE PEOPLE OF GREECE

AFTER reading history books and old Greek myths and legends, people in other countries sometimes imagine that all Greeks are tall and fair-haired with "classical" profiles, but that was probably never true. Ancient Greeks, like their descendants to-day, were a mixture of types and strains: the result of wave after wave of migrants who came across the sea or down from the land-mass in the north.

Since classical times, invasions, wars and foreign occupations have brought many other races who have intermingled with the Greeks—Visigoths and Slavs, Frankish crusaders, Italian colonists and merchants, Turks and Albanians—until to-day they are as much a mixture of races as we in Britain.

To look at, the typical modern Greek (so far as there is one, for there are many exceptions) is dark haired, dark eyed, well built and not very tall. But whatever his appearance, he is very much the descendant of his ancient forebears in character, habit, thought and language. Like them, he has a quick, inventive mind, a vivid imagination and a great love of talk and discussion. Of all subjects, politics often seem to fascinate him most. In fact, discussing politics is to many Greeks what cricket is to some Englishmen, and it would be hard to find a coffee house in any Greek town or village without a lively group of men arguing the merits of some topical political question—Greek or foreign

—with bright eyes, eager faces and gesticulating hands.

But though the Greeks take a passionate interest in politics, and discuss them so well, they have often in the past suffered from unstable governments and inefficient administrations. And though they are an intensely democratic and freedom-loving people (and themselves invented democracy over 2,000 years ago) they have often lived under dictators. Is the reason, perhaps, that they are almost *too* intelligent, *too* quick witted, and *too* intolerant of the mistakes of others—particularly of their rulers? No doubt, that is part of it. But equally important is the fact that in the short time since they freed themselves from the old Turkish Empire (since the 1830's in some parts of Greece, only since 1912 in others) the Greeks have constantly been involved in wars, and in upheavals resulting from wars, and so have had little chance to develop a strong tradition of stable and efficient rule. In fact, considering their tragic sufferings in the recent past, it is surprising only that the Greeks have recovered so quickly and so well.

As individuals, one of the most pleasant characteristics of the modern Greeks, like their ancient forefathers, is their friendliness and hospitality to strangers. One English traveller tells how he got lost in a remote mountain pass. An obliging peasant, of whom he asked the way, left his work and spent three hours showing him the route over the hills—time which he would have to make up in his leisure hours. But when the traveller tried to pay him for his kindness, the peasant refused with a dignity which made him feel ashamed.

Another Englishman, a university professor, arrived late one evening in an isolated little Greek village. He had been hiking about the countryside for several days wearing his oldest clothes, with a few night-things in a tattered rucksack on his back. A poor but cheerful peasant family gladly shared their simple meal with him and gave him their best bed for the night. Next morning, when the professor was about to say good-bye, his host shyly offered him a handful of money. He had collected it from his neighbours while the Englishman still slept, convinced by his dilapidated appearance that the visitor must be even poorer than himself but too proud to admit it. Only with great difficulty did the professor persuade him to give the money back. This eagerness to help strangers is common to all Greeks and is particularly strong among the country people. It springs from a very genuine friendliness and interest.

Sometimes the reserved Englishman is surprised by the form this interest takes. He is quite likely to be bombarded with questions by even the most casual Greek acquaintance. "Where do you come from? What is your job? Are you married? How much did your suit cost? What do you think of our Government?" (Like the Irish, the Greeks are often "agin the government".) However brief your visit, the Greek will gladly offer you a drink and be offended if you try to repay the compliment. And this friendliness, as many British people found during the last war (particularly escaping prisoners), does not fade away in times of misfortune.

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug-of-war" is a common saying. The Greeks have

a great reputation for being keen businessmen. Their quick wits and shrewd bargaining powers have brought them commercial success in many activities all over the world. And yet, despite their business sense, they are an honest people. They enjoy bargaining and take it as a matter of course. But when they make money, they can be very generous in the ways that they use it. Hundreds of Greek towns and villages boast a hospital or fine public building given by a local benefactor who has made his fortune either in Greece or in some foreign country.

Religion plays an important part in Greek life. In ancient times, before the coming of Christ, the Greeks were so impressed by the beauties of the universe that they imagined a set of gods each personifying some aspect of nature. In this way they tried to recognise the moving force that created the world as they knew it. Nowadays most Greeks belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, a Christian Community which has many links with the Church of England, and whose services are full of beautiful and picturesque ceremonial. Both in town and country, religious festivals are occasions for rejoicing and sometimes for colourful processions.

Conscious of their own wonderful history, the Greeks set great store on education, and since their liberation from the old Turkish Empire they have made good progress in providing elementary education for their children. In many villages the most noticeable building is the local school where boys and girls go to do their lessons. When they are older, they may go on to a "Gymnasium" (Secondary School) in a near-by town and then



EVZONE'S IN FULL DRESS MARCHING TOWARDS THE ROYAL PALACE



SUMMIT OF MOUNT OLYMPUS, HOME OF THE GODS  
*Chapter IV.*

study at the University of Athens and become lawyers, doctors or teachers. There are also technical schools, and another university at Salonica which was founded in 1920.

If Aristotle or Plato could come back from ancient Athens to modern Greece, they would probably find that they understood a good deal of to-day's citizens' conversation, and still more of what is written in some of their newspapers and books. For modern Greek is still very like the language of ancient times; it has changed far less than English has in a far shorter time. For example, the Greek of Homer (who wrote nearly 3,000 years ago) is much closer to modern Greek than Chaucer's English (only 600 years old) is to what we speak to-day. Over the centuries there have been developments, of course, just as Latin has changed into modern Italian, yet the peoples who have invaded Greece altered the language very little. For a long time Greek remained the language of the Eastern Christians, and the whole of the New Testament was originally written in it. To-day, the man-in-the-street speaks a somewhat simplified Greek which has been unconsciously adapted in the course of the centuries, and has absorbed a few foreign words. Novels, popular books and plays are written in this style. But, for official purposes, what is claimed to be a "purer" Greek is used. This is the language of government announcements, law courts, parliament and the universities.

Hard-working, intelligent and independent, the Greeks are an intensely patriotic people who take a pride not only in their country but also in their own district, town or village. Compared with Britain

the population of the towns is small, and despite the steady stream of people leaving the countryside to try their fortune in the larger towns, most Greeks still live in the villages and on the plains. Some leave home to join the Greek communities in other countries, particularly in America, Australia and Africa, never forgetting their native land and always sending money back to help the family at home. Sometimes the emigrant returns, rich and respected, to become a leading citizen of his native district.

Apart from the ordinary Greek population, there are still a few small settlements of other peoples scattered about the country. Some of the Vlachs, for example, who came from Roumania centuries ago, still wander over the wilder Greek mountains each summer with their flocks. They live in rough huts on the mountainside, tending their scraggy sheep and goats. Some experts say that these keen-eyed, weatherbeaten Vlachs are descendants of Roman Legionaries stationed centuries ago on the frontier of the Roman Empire. They have a language all their own which some of them still speak. They wear rough goats' hair cloaks and carry their shepherd's crooks strung across their shoulders. Many of them settle in the valleys only in the winter.

As a legacy of the long years of Turkish rule, many Turks still live in Greek Thrace in the north-east of the country. There, they have their own mosques and schools and newspapers, and complete political and cultural freedom; they elect their own Turkish M.P.s to the Greek Parliament at Athens.

Besides them, there are the remnants of thriving communities of Spanish-speaking Jews in Salonica and some of the smaller towns. Their ancestors were expelled from Spain by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, but few of them survived the persecution of the Germans in the Second World War. The Albanians, settled in the country round Athens and on some of the islands by the rulers of the old Turkish Empire, were more fortunate. Now they have lost all contact with their old country, but they still keep their language and their customs. Finally, after the First World War, Greece opened her doors to some thousands of Armenian refugees who could find no other home—an action which emphasised the humanity and hospitality of the Greeks despite their own tragically difficult post-war problems in those days.

Though the Greeks are a frugal race and, by British standards, often have a meagre diet, they do enjoy good food. Their cooking is very like that of Turkey and other Eastern Mediterranean countries (though whether “Greek” cookery is really Turkish, or “Turkish” cookery Greek, is an argument that has never yet been settled). Their vegetables and meat dishes are delicious, and so is their fish—including octopus and squid. But they have a sweet tooth, too, and enjoy a variety of pastries and sweetmeats, most of them less well known in other countries than the familiar “Turkish Delight” which on many occasions is used as a substitute for a cup of coffee or a glass of liqueur. The Greek also enjoys his glass of wine. He likes it to taste of resin, a result which he achieves by adding resin to the barrel. He finds it a most

refreshing drink in warm weather. In the cold, he prefers a tiny glass of a strong, clear spirit made from the skins and pips of grapes and known as Ouzo. Apart from alcohol, the Greeks are also great coffee drinkers, and no visit to a shop or office is complete without a cup of black, finely ground, heavily sugared "Turkish" coffee drunk from a cup a little bigger than an egg-cup.

Until recent years the country people in Greece wore the traditional local clothes of their district. Of these the best known is the famous *foustanella*—the white kilt worn with a wide-sleeved shirt and embroidered bodice by the Evzones, the mountaineers from Epirus on whose dress the uniform of the Greek Royal Guards is modelled. Guardsmen in full regalia are always on duty at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Constitution Square in Athens. But do not be misled by their fairy-tale appearance. The Evzones are tough, determined fighters.

In villages in the remoter country districts the peasant women, too, still wear the local dress. Beautifully embroidered with silk or wool, this usually consists of a long, full skirt, often with several petticoats, and a variety of gaily hued bodices. A veil of silk or muslin with coins strung across the forehead completes the pretty picture. In some districts you will see the men wearing long and baggy trousers, folds hanging well below the knee, waist swathed in a wide cummerbund. When peasants gather round for dancing on a feast-day in their traditional clothes they are a gay sight: the white of the women's skirts vividly setting off the colours of the men's embroidered

jackets. But in most districts, and among the younger men and women, "European" clothes are now the usual dress.

While a few sophisticated fellow-countrymen in the towns are dancing fox-trots in night-clubs, the Greek peasant prefers the many traditional dances that have been handed down from generation to generation for as long as he can remember. Easter time is a specially festive season, but the many other feast days in the Church calendar, and village weddings and christenings, are also occasions for merriment and dancing. Accompanied by drums and pipes, or clarinet and banjo, chains of dancers wind round in circles. From time to time, the leader spins round, falls on one knee, springs up again, or slaps his leg in time with the catching rhythm of the music. On any hot summer evening you are likely to hear, floating softly through the windows of a country inn, the mysterious, Eastern-sounding strains of old folk-songs. Some of these lovely melodies are ages old but they have never been written down: they are sung and played by ear and passed on from father to son. Plaintive or lively, tragic or gay, these national songs mark the early beginning of the literature of the modern Greeks.

### III

## THE TOWNS OF GREECE

AT every turn in Greece you are face to face with history. There are few towns that do not have a wealth of memories of ancient times. Yet often a town with a world-famous name and a glorious past is to-day only a handful of humble, red-tiled cottages with perhaps a few broken ruins near by. The whole world has heard of Delphi, Olympia and Argus, but nowadays they are nothing more than hamlets. The only really big towns—at least, by British standards—are Athens, Piraeus and Salonica.

Athens has been a great name for twenty-five centuries, and for several hundred years it was the centre of ancient Greek civilisation. Then, when Constantinople became the capital of the Greek Empire, Athens gradually dwindled and faded until, by the end of the Turkish occupation of Greece early in the nineteenth century, it was little more than a rambling village. Its Turkish-style houses with their curved tiles and wide balconies straggled up the slopes of the Acropolis whose temples, too, had fallen on evil days. Indeed, Athens had become so insignificant a place that the first capital of Greece, when she won her independence from the Turks, was at Nauplia in the Peloponnese. The seat of Government was not moved to Athens for several years. Meanwhile, the near-by port of Piraeus had also declined and was a mere jumble of fishermen's huts.

To-day, Athens and the port of Piraeus together

have a population of 1,378,586. Both towns have grown fast in recent years: in fact many people think they have grown *too* fast and that too big a proportion of the whole Greek population now lives in them. At any rate, here are concentrated the political and administrative authorities of the country, the headquarters of the armed forces, most of the places of higher learning, and a good part of Greece's industry and commerce.

Parliament—along with the Prime Minister's office, army headquarters and various other official departments—is now housed in the old Royal Palace—an oblong, orange-yellow stone building which looks down on Constitution Square and the Unknown Warrior's tomb in the centre of the city. Behind it lies the National Park, which was once the private grounds of the Palace and is now a pleasant, shady public open space. The King and Queen have moved to a smaller Palace, on the far side of the Park, at whose gates the kilted Evzones are always to be found whenever the Royal Family is in residence in Athens. But often they go up to their country home at Tatoi, in the wooded hills a few miles from the city.

Modern Athens was largely built by German architects in the reign of King Otto, the first King of Greece, in the first half of the nineteenth century. From that time date the wide avenues and two big main squares (Constitution Square and Concord Square), and the typical, square, stuccoed Athenian houses. Since the Second World War, many of these old family houses in the city centre have been pulled down to make way for big, white blocks of modern flats. But elsewhere the streets have changed

little since they were first laid out. Near the Acropolis, one can still find the narrow, crooked by-ways and old Turkish houses of a hundred years ago. Although some of these attractive buildings have recently been demolished to make way for archaeological excavations, enough still remain to bring a quaint charm to this quarter of modern Athens. Here the family keeps itself to itself, and there are very few windows on the ground floor. The top storey leans out over the street. Behind the house is a neatly kept little garden that gives welcome shade during the summer, and often shelters a eucalyptus tree of a variety which the Athenians imported from Australia.

Another charming, and smarter, district of modern Athens lies round the foot of Mount Lycabettus—the steep, pine-wooded little hill that dominates the centre of the city, with a white-washed church gleaming from its summit. Here in Colonaki, the houses seem to stand on each others' shoulders up the hillside and the roads are so steep that in places they give way to wide flights of stairs. The higher the house, the wider the view across the town and the Attic plain, with the sea and the hills of neighbouring islands in the distance.

Like most Mediterranean cities, modern Athens seems to come to life in the evening, particularly in the summer when the heat of the day drives indoors everyone who can get out of the sun. As dusk falls, the hundreds of cafés fill with voluble citizens, drinking cup after cup of Turkish coffee, busy with their animated discussions of politics, the international situation and the failings of the Govern-

YACHTS IN THE OLD HARBOUR OF MUNICHA, PIRAEUS





VIEW OVER ATHENS TOWARDS MOUNT HYMETTUS



ATHENS, WITH MOUNT LYCABETTUS IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE  
AND MOUNT PENTELICUS IN THE BACKGROUND

ment of the day. One wonders if they will ever go to bed! In summer open-air theatres and cinemas are popular; some show Greek films—products of a new industry some of whose work has already been admired in London. Like their classical ancestors, the modern Athenians are also fond of the drama, and support their National Theatre with pride. After the play, family groups are to be found, sitting at little tables in Constitution Square or on the pavements of near-by streets, eating ices and drinking soft drinks until well after midnight.

The neon lights flash and twinkle, the bright shop windows glitter in the dark, but wherever you go in modern Athens you cannot help seeing the majestic citadel of the Acropolis dominating the city. Poised on its limestone crag, gleaming white in the floodlights, with the dark sky for background, it is a constant reminder of Athens' glorious history. So let us leave the modern town for a little, and recall the great days of the Golden Age.

In the days when each Greek city was a self-contained little republic, protection against attack was a first necessity. For this, Athens was particularly well sited. It is surrounded by mountains and far enough from the sea to have ample warning of enemy landings on the coast. The Acropolis formed a natural site for fortification. Around its base were stone walls which enclosed clusters of dwellings and water-springs. Near by was the *agora*, or market place, where business was transacted and government carried on.

In old days, the shrines and temples of the Acropolis must have been a splendid sight—

particularly the celebrated Parthenon. This famous temple was built in honour of Athene, patron goddess of the town of Athens. When the Persians invaded and conquered Greece, the original temple was sacked and destroyed. The statesman Pericles rebuilt it in an even more splendid manner than before and made it a superb example of the best Greek architecture. He employed one of the finest sculptors of all time, Pheidias, to make a great statue of the goddess Athene in gold and ivory. It was Pheidias' masterpiece and Pericles placed it outside the Parthenon, facing the sea. When Justinian I, Emperor of Constantinople, came to the throne, he turned the Parthenon into a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Later, it became a Turkish mosque. Finally, in 1687, it was almost destroyed by a stray cannon-ball from the besieging Venetians, which set light to gun-powder stored there by the Turks. To-day, partly restored, its graceful columns, carved in the white, blue-veined marble that comes from the quarries of Mount Pentelicus not far away, still remind the world of the achievements of Greek culture.

It is not difficult to find one's way about the centre of modern Athens. Thanks to King Otto's town planners, many of the streets are straight and criss-cross each other at right angles. The centre is enclosed by a sort of triangle with Concord Square at the top, Piraeus Street and Stadium Street as the two sides, and Hermes Street as the base. This is the luxury shopping centre. Hermes Street is the Regent Street of Athens and is filled with jewellers' shops, fashionable arcades and all sorts of stores

with fancy goods. Many of the glittering windows offer tempting displays of silk, spun from the cocoons of silkworms fed on the mulberry trees that abound in Greece. Others catch the eye with beautifully designed rugs and carpets made by craftsman-peasants, who are also responsible for the embroideries and pottery which make "window-shopping" such a pleasure in Hermes Street. A special delicacy is the honey, distilled by the bees from thyme which grows on Mount Hymettus.

Piraeus, on the other hand, is entirely a modern town, a busy centre for Greek coastal trade and international shipping. The traveller by sea arrives alongside a quay in the central harbour. As he walks ashore to set foot on Greek soil for the first time, all around him is bustling activity, for apart from its maritime interests Piraeus is a big industrial town with over a hundred factories. The lively waterfront, with its piles of vegetables and fruit, makes a picturesque background for the caiques and the larger ships that lie at anchor or pick their way through the never-ending traffic of the port.

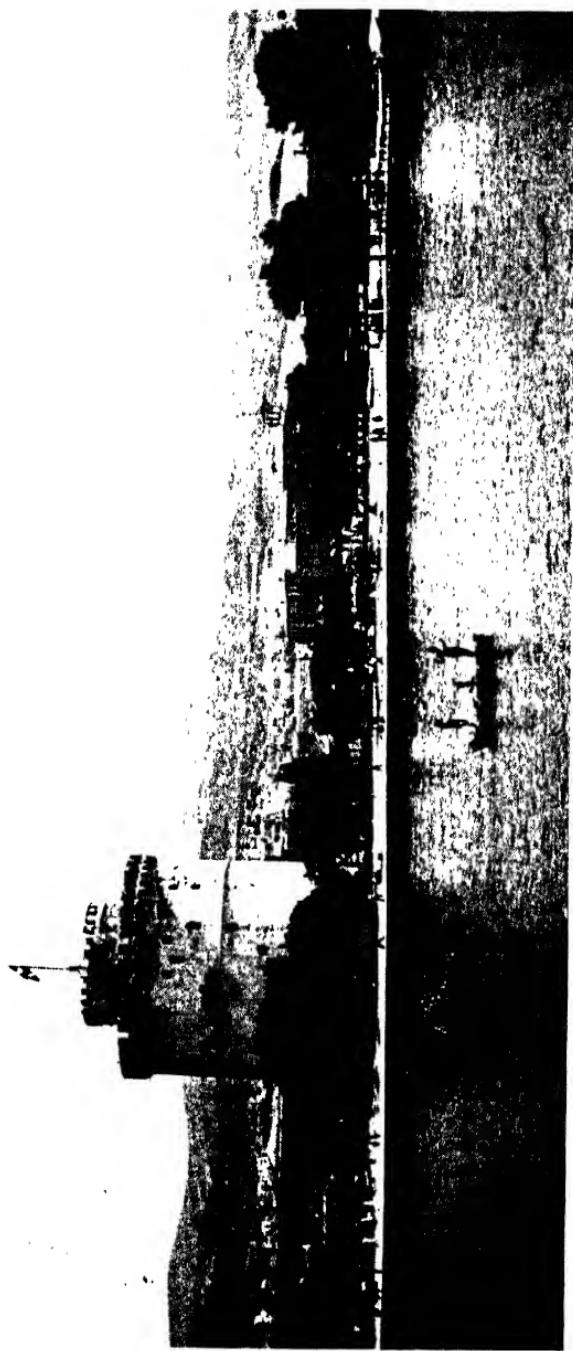
The third largest town of Greece is Salonica, capital of Greek Macedonia. From the earliest times it has been an important place, not the least of its claims to fame being that it was the scene of St. Paul's preaching. He established the first Christian community here, and to its members addressed his Epistle to the Thessalonians. At one time it rivalled the great city of Constantinople for wealth and luxurious living. Now, every year, the authorities of Salonica hold an International Exhibition to encourage trade. The port is the outlet for goods from Yugoslavia to the *Ægean*

Sea, and handles considerable transit trade with that country. The town itself seems to climb up the slopes of a gentle mountain at the end of the bay, rather like the tiers of seats in a theatre. The houses look down on a long quay which terminates at the White Tower. Built by the Venetians in the fifteenth century, the Tower now marks the beginning of fine public gardens, where, during the torrid heat of summer, people go to enjoy the cool shade and, if they are lucky, the song of the nightingales.

The next Greek town in order of importance is Patras, which, like the others, is a port. It is the largest town in the Peloponnese, and through its docks are transported vast quantities of currants and wine. It is laid out very formally, like Athens, with straight streets and correct rectangular squares. Two important events happened here in history: the Crucifixion of St. Andrew in the 4th century, and the unfurling of the Greek national banner in 1821, when the Bishop of Patras proclaimed the War of Independence against the Turkish Empire. To-day the port is active and prosperous. It looks impressive from the old castle, built in the Middle Ages and towering above the town, giving a splendid view right across the Gulf of Corinth down to the hills of the opposite shore. Not far away are some interesting temple ruins, and by them bubbles a clear, fresh spring, where in the old days, invalids would come to consult the oracle. A mirror was hung on the end of cord and let down to the level of the water. It was then shown to the invalid, who could tell, from the reflection, what his hopes of a cure would be.



THE LAKESIDE TOWN OF CASTORIA IN WESTERN MACEDONIA



THE WHITE TOWER AT SALONICA

Then there is Volos, a busy port and city built on a hillside sloping down to a bay facing the island of Euboea. This is the chief harbour and market centre of Thessaly, exporting all types of agricultural produce and possessing enough factories to make it a small rival to Piraeus. There is a charming promenade along the waterfront leading to the old town, where picturesque houses are scattered on slopes that reach a height of over 2,000 feet. But in the earthquake of 1954 a great part of the town, old and new, was destroyed. According to legend, Jason sailed in his ship, the *Argo*, from here, in quest of the Golden Fleece.

Of the other smaller towns of Greece—Ioanina in Epirus with its lake and island, Chalcis on the narrow strait between Euboea and the mainland, Corfu with its Venetian palazzas and ancient olive groves, Calamata, Nauplia and the rest—there is no place for a description here. Each in its own setting has its individual atmosphere and charm. To know Greece one must know her towns-people and her towns.

## IV

## THE MOUNTAINS AND PLAINS

THE mountains of Greece are so grand and beautiful that it is small wonder that the ancient Greeks chose one, Olympus, as the home of their gods and another, Parnassus, as the playground of the Muses. Their names, too, have passed into every-day talk. We still say “Olympian” to describe something lofty and awe-inspiring. And we talk of “heaping Pelion on Ossa”—two mountains in north-east Thessaly. The plains of Greece, too, are just as beautiful, and as rich in myth and legend.

The plain of Attica, in which Athens is built, lies in a triangle formed by the sea coast and two ranges of hills. Prominent among these is Mount Hymettus, some three thousand feet high, and often in summer bathed in a fine violet haze—a view people remember as one of the loveliest in all Greece. Hymettus is still famous for the delicious thyme-scented honey which bees gather on its slopes. Below the hills, the central Attic plain is rich in olives, vines and market gardens. The Greek national resinated wine, *retsina*, is grown here, and also other red and white wines, without resin, for connoisseurs in Athens. Tilling their plots of land, the peasants of Attica often unearth ancient coins and pottery and sometimes fragments of statues that have lain buried and forgotten for more than two thousand years.

Among the many attractions of this pleasant and historic district is its splendid climate. Athens and

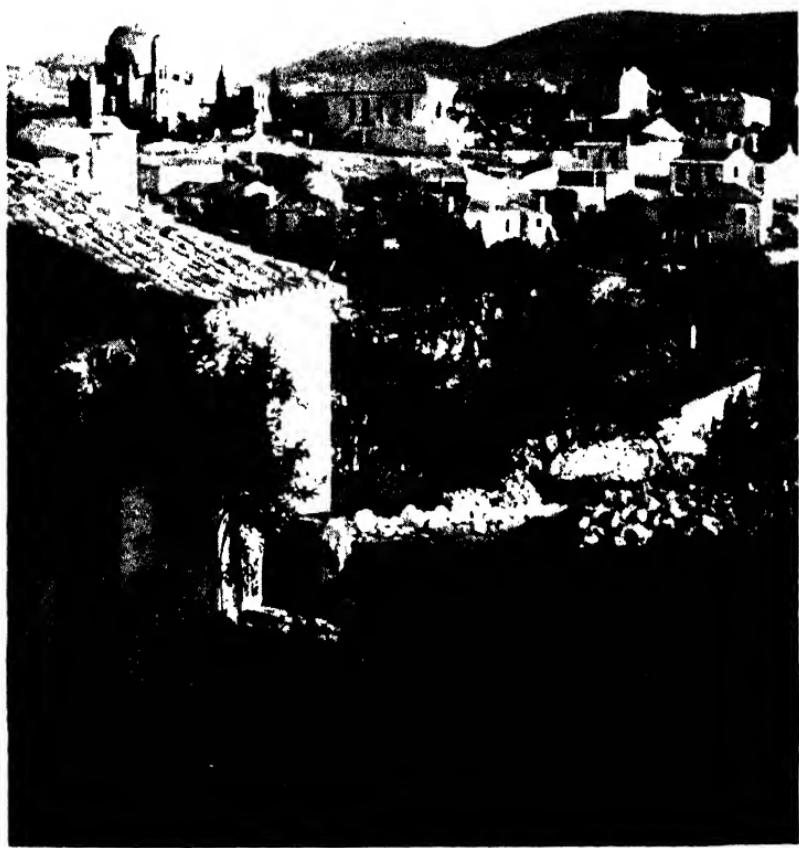
Attica claim more days of sunshine in a year (between 295 and 315) than any other place in Europe. The air is fresh and bracing. Even in the middle of November the sun shines bright and warm, and the occasional short bursts of rain only serve to clear the atmosphere and make the sunshine even brighter. Perhaps that is one reason why the people of Attica often seem so jovial and high-spirited, always eager to greet the stranger with a happy smile and torrents of conversation.

Up the east coast of Attica is the Plain of Marathon, scene of a great Greek victory over the invading Persians two thousand years ago. It gives its name to the gruelling race run in to-day's Olympic Games. A runner was sent from Athens to Sparta with news that the Persians were on the march. In two days, he covered a distance of 150 miles. Some say that he returned to Athens and, after announcing the Greek victory, dropped dead, his noble heart over-strained. To-day the plain is eerily quiet, so quiet, according to one old writer, that at night one can hear the ghostly neighing of horses and the sound of fighting. Marathon is overlooked by Penteli, a mountain made almost entirely of the white marble which was used to build the Parthenon and other temples and is still quarried to-day. As it grows older, this lovely marble mellows to a light rust colour, which gives it a specially beautiful appearance.

Mount Parnes, really a range of mountains, divides Attica from Boeotia, whose rolling plain stretches far into the distance right up to Mount Parnassus. In the middle of this fertile farming country lies the ancient city of Thebes;

now an untidy, straggling shadow of its former magnificent self with no visible trace of a single classical building. In places the land here reminds one just a little of the flat bleak landscapes of Lincoln or Norfolk: cornfields divided by reeded canals, slow-moving streams, willows and poplars. Occasionally a heron rises from the marshes, and a stork flaps sluggishly over the muddy water. But soon these marshes may finally disappear as modern drainage and irrigation works are complete. Already Lake Copais has been transformed into rich agricultural land for nearly a generation. The quick-witted citizens of ancient Athens used to joke about the placid people of Boeotia and say they were like pigs pasturing on their rich soil. To-day their land still produces bumper harvests.

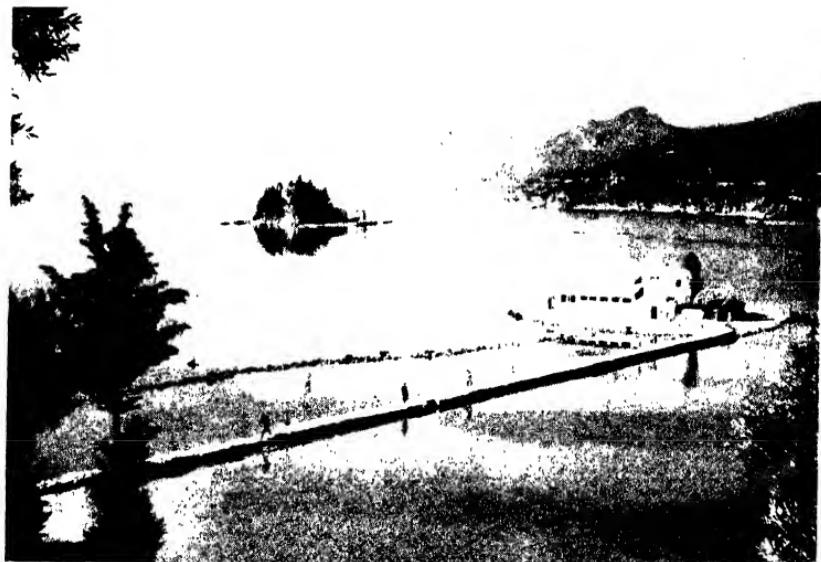
The main road across the plain of Boeotia runs on through a valley between Mount Parnassus and Mount Helicon. These great mountain ranges, crowned with snow in winter and circled by eagles that wheel and hover above the cliffs, are so impressive that the old Greeks used to consider the area the very centre of the earth, on which all routes converged. At its foot is the site of Delphi, the famous shrine and home of the oracle. All the cities and states of ancient Greece relied on the oracle for guidance in their affairs, and in gratitude for its help, erected magnificent monuments within the sacred area. At the centre was the temple of Apollo, the god to whom one of the peaks of Parnassus is sacred. Inside was the room of the oracle. It seems that a cleft in the rock emitted fumes that came from deep down in the earth. Over this cleft the priestess would sit inhaling the



A VILLAGE IN BOEOTIA, NEAR THEBES



THE TOWERING METEORA ROCKS NEAR KALABAKA



THE COAST OF CORFU ISLAND  
(*Chapter IV*)

fumes, until she was ready to prophesy. Behind the temple, rising in terraces, were more buildings, including another temple and a theatre. To the right is the Castalian fountain, in whose sacred waters visitors had to wash before entering the presence of the oracle. The spring still bubbles merrily to-day, its waters quite as silvery as when the old poets regarded it as a source of inspiration. From the rock cliffs above the spring, the people of Delphi used to hurl those guilty of sacrilege. It is said that they cast *Æsop* down from here to the rocks below, because the famous fable writer had been foolish enough to make a sarcastic remark about them.

A long, straight road running across the broad, undulating plain of Thessaly leads to the astonishing monasteries of the Meteora. Here, a forest of giant boulders towers upwards from the hillside in a huge fantasy of shapes. High up on the summits of the most isolated, inaccessible rocks, are perched the monasteries and their churches: quaint, jumbled buildings with wide wooden galleries projecting out beyond the rock face. Back in the fourteenth century, hermits chose to live here in holy solitude. Their numbers grew, and at one time there were twenty monasteries on these rock tops. When a visitor arrived at one of them, the monks used to let down a net at the end of a long rope. He sat inside the net and was hauled up by windlass to a platform at the top. The net was then pulled in with a hooked pole and the breathless visitor tumbled out on to the platform! Nowadays, there are only a handful of monks left, and most of the monasteries are ruined and deserted. Visitors to

the few monks that remain climb up steep stairways cut out of the rock face. From the monasteries themselves there are spectacular views of the land around. One can see the snow-topped peaks of the massive Pindus range of mountains silhouetted against a dazzling sky, and blossoming orchards in the valley below. The monasteries still contain some wonderful treasures: jewelled crosses, gold-embroidered tapestries, and beautifully painted icons. The few monks live a simple life of prayer and meditation, far from the bustle that goes on beneath them.

A finely built road cuts through the Pindus Mountains and leads to Ioanina, chief town of Epirus, built on a lake shore with towering peaks for a background. Years ago, in the days of Turkish rule, it was inhabited by the wicked Ali Pasha, who held his magnificent court in his palace on an island in the lake. Reclining on a crimson silk divan and smoking a long pipe, the white-bearded Ali would lazily issue commands that meant life or death to his subjects. Nearly a hundred miles north of Ioanina, across the abrupt mountain ranges, the deep valleys and the thick forests, lies another famous lake, Prespa, in whose deep clear waters the frontiers of Albania, Yugoslavia and Greece now meet. Remote and silent, the caves and crannies in Prespa's high limestone cliffs are the home of thousands of wild pigeons, while pelicans nest by the waters' edge.

Over the east coast, Mount Olympus, home of the gods, is chief of a series of mountains, the highest and most important range in Greece. Whatever the time of day, its beauty is impressive.

The early morning sun veils it in a gentle haze, the moonlight makes its majestic peak and clefts stand out in sharp relief. The mountains of Pelion and Ossa, on the coast of Thessaly, figure in the old tale that tells how the Titans, a race of giants, tried to pile them on top of each other and so reach the summit of Olympus and attack the gods. The spear of Achilles was said to have been cut from a tree growing on Mount Pelion.

The plain of Argos in the Peloponnese, framed on either side by majestic mountains, makes a splendid background to the ancient fortress of Mycenae. Here lie the ruins of a gigantic palace and the tomb of King Agamemnon, leader of the Greek army which went to Troy to win back his sister-in-law, Helen. One of its most impressive features is the Lion Gate, which formed an entrance to the fortified citadel, and is topped by a triangular slab of stone showing two lions in heraldic poses. The plain below the ruined city is a favourite camping-ground for gypsies. They travel in horse-drawn carts painted with flowers and gay designs. The men wear slouch hats, the women favour long, elaborate petticoats and loose short-sleeved cotton blouses, usually in vivid pinks and yellows, with a handkerchief negligently tied over their heads.

We associate the name of Arcadia with poetic happiness, shepherds gaily piping in flowery fields, and idyllic romance. These were the ancient highlands where the great god Pan lived, presiding over the love-affairs of handsome shepherds and pretty shepherdesses. But in our day Arcadia is a barren, hard country, surrounded by mountains which are the haunt of wolves and polecats. The

road from Tripolis, capital of Arcadia, winds past Mount Taygetus, a lovely snow-capped peak, and arrives in Sparta, set in the valley of the River Eurotas. In the days when the Spartans ruled their own city State, their name was a by-word for bravery and endurance. Their warriors were taught from early youth that courage and toughness were man's greatest virtues. Simple living and hard discipline made them incredibly brave soldiers. Their most famous exploit was at Thermopylae, a narrow pass through the mountain chain on the edge of the plain of Thessaly. Here a mere handful of Spartans put up an heroic resistance against the invading Persian Army. To-day, a tablet marks the spot, and three hundred graceful cypress trees commemorate the tiny force of three hundred Spartans who fought till none of them was left alive.

In the north-west of the Peloponnese is the plain of Olympia. Here the ruins among the pine forests show that the Olympic Games, held every fourth year in ancient Greece, were organised on a great scale. Besides the large stadium there were lavish accommodation for competitors and spectators, elaborate gymnasia, temples, statues and treasures. Many thousands of people came to watch the contests, while the competitors were the pick of the athletes in the whole Greek world. Before the games, they assembled and took a solemn oath to obey the rules of good and loyal sportsmanship. Then came a variety of testing contests, including wrestling, discus and javelin throwing, running, boxing and chariot-racing. The winners were crowned with laurel or olive, had the supreme honour of being the subject of odes written by the best poets of

Greece, and had statues of themselves erected at Olympia. But activity was not limited to sports alone. The flower of Greek society assembled here, generals and statesmen, poets and men of wealth, philosophers and historians. The patron of the Games was Zeus, greatest of all the gods, and the ruins of his temple at Olympia can still be seen. His statue was once rated among the seven wonders of the world. Made of gold and ivory and studded with rare gems, it dominated the rest of the temple. There is a story that the conceited Roman Emperor Caligula ordered the statue to be taken to Rome, where the head was to be replaced by a likeness of himself. But when the workmen began the job, the statue suddenly laughed aloud, so the idea was hastily dropped! The statue was later moved to Constantinople and destroyed in a fire. The Olympic Games, which began about the ninth century B.C., continued for well over a thousand years until they were forbidden by the Emperor Theodosius because they kept alive the names and worship of the old pagan gods. They were revived in 1896 and, as a tribute to the international brotherhood of sport, most countries send athletes to compete in them. But now the meeting place is in a different capital each time.

Wandering through the wild Greek mountains, looking out across the wide, sweeping plains towards the sea, it is easy to forget for a moment that twenty-five centuries have rolled by, and to imagine oneself suddenly back in the days of the myths and legends of ancient Greece.

V

## THE ISLANDS

WHEN the hero Theseus returned from Crete after a daring adventure, he forgot to hoist white sails as a signal of his success to his aged father. When *Ægeus* saw the ship's black sails he thought his son was dead and threw himself into the sea. That, according to the old legend, is how the *Ægean* Sea, which separates Greece from Asia Minor, got its name.

The islands in that sea include three main groups: the Northern Sporades, the Cyclades and the Dodecanese. The people of the smaller islands, mostly rocky and bare, depend mainly upon the products of the sea for their existence, on ships, and on work away from home. The sailor's family rarely sees him at home. While he is away battling with the waves and winds and currents (for the *Ægean*, despite its lovely blue waters, is often stormy), they depend on the money he sends back to eke out the meagre livelihood they win from cultivating a few olive trees and vines. The sponge-fishers and divers, too, lead an exciting life: they are the special heroes of the boys. They take their boats to the far-off North African coasts, where the water is often so crystal-clear that you can see right down to the ocean bed where the sponges lie undisturbed. With helmets to protect their heads, their bodies attached to the ends of ropes, the sponge-fishers of the old school used to dive into the water carrying a trident in one hand for

spearing sponges and a heavy stone in the other. Now they use more modern undersea equipment. The sponge-divers band together in crews and spend all their time at sea, taking it in turns to dive for the sponges and going ashore only to fetch fresh water. At the end of a season, the sponge-diver has sometimes earned enough to spend the next six months quietly at home. Memories of enemy sharks are the only threat to his peace of mind!

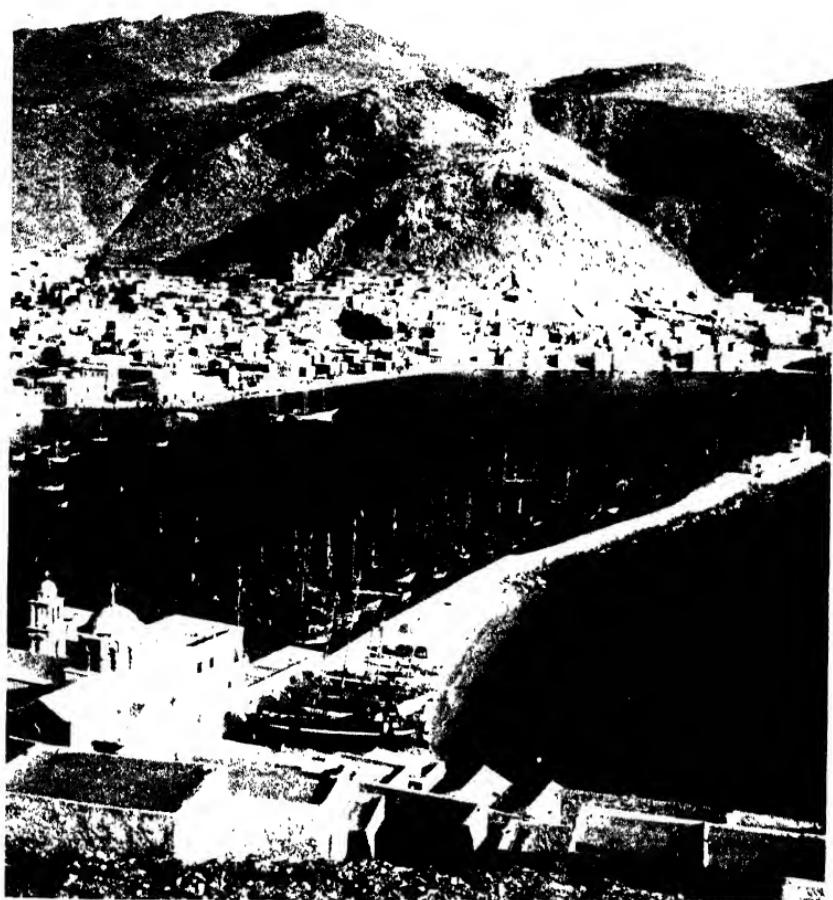
The islanders' houses are generally square and flat-roofed, painted with spotless whitewash that reflects the dazzling sun, although on some islands they also build with sloping roofs and red tiles. The lower room is often a store, the upper room being lived in by the whole family. The fronts of the older houses sometimes have two small windows separated by a single column. This is particularly noticeable on the island of Calymnos, where the family bed is usually built-in and reaches the level of the window-sill. And always the staircase is built outside the house.

Skyros is the largest island in the Northern Sporades. It is here, among the olive groves, that Rupert Brooke, like Byron an English poet and a great lover of Greece, is buried. On the green island of Skopelos, prune drying is one of the chief occupations of the people. First they harvest the dark-blue plums and leave them in trays exposed to the baking sun. Then they put them in a slow oven until they are dried and ready for export as prunes. Lower down the map are the Cyclades Islands, ancient, beautiful, and full of tradition. Delos, which is both geographically and

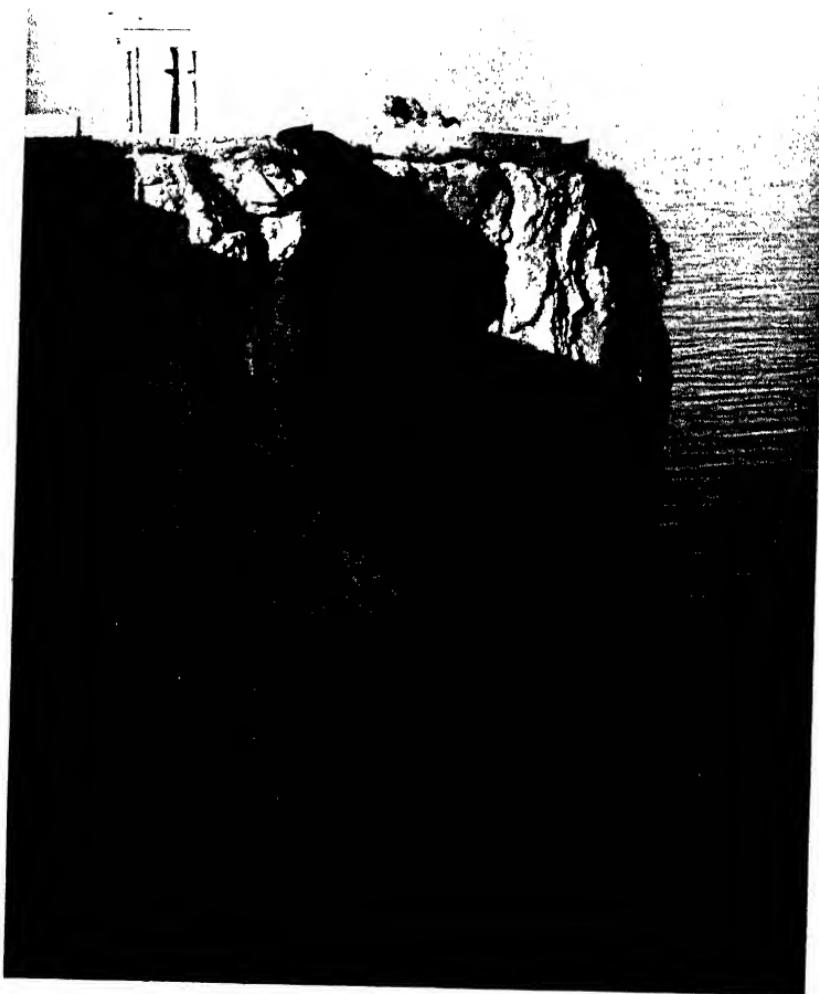
traditionally the centre, is the legendary birthplace of Apollo. It is rich in famous ruins, among them the five surviving statues of the avenue of lions which overlooked the Sacred Lake. Delos is encircled by five islands: Myconos, with its picturesque white windmills, where the people bake delicious little cakes of almond paste; Syra, a lively and prosperous fishing centre; Tinos, the "Lourdes" of Greece to which come many invalids hoping to be cured by the celebrated holy picture of the Virgin there; and the two islands of Paros and Naxos. From the quarries of Paros came the lovely Parian marble used by the ancient sculptors.

Passing Santorini, built round the crater of an extinct volcano where vampires were once said to live, we come to the islands of the Dodecanese, which include Rhodes ("Rose island") with its flower gardens, Carpathos and its gaily dressed peasants, and Nisyros pitted with volcanic craters. But the most famous of all is Patmos, one of the holiest islands of the *Ægean*. St. John the Divine was exiled here and is said to have written the fourth Gospel in a cave where the Holy Spirit spoke to him from a cleft in the wall. The great monastery, built in honour of St. John in the eleventh century, contains many treasures. On the near-by islands of Samos and Chios the inhabitants are very busy with the less holy pursuits of wine pressing, olive growing and merchant shipping.

Off the west coast of Greece facing Italy are the Ionian Islands, the largest being Corfu, Ithaca, Lefkas, Cephalonia and Zante. Ithaca was the legendary home of Homer's wily, wandering hero,



CAIQUES IN THE PORT OF CALYMNOS ISLAND



THE CLIFFS AT LINDOS ON THE ISLAND OF RHODES

Odysseus. The whole atmosphere of these islands is full of legend. Near Corfu is the islet of Pondikonisi ("rat island"), shaped like a boat and supposed to be the result of Zeus' wrath when he turned the ship used by Odysseus into stone. Corfu itself is a most romantic place. Unlike many of the other islands it has rich, fertile vegetation—cypresses and pine trees overtop thick groves of myrtle and ilex, while elsewhere are flourishing plantations of lemons, olives and oranges. In some ways Corfu is more like Italy than Greece. The houses and narrow winding streets of its main town recall the appearance of Venice, and many of the buildings themselves are designed on Venetian models. There is also a strong English influence, a reminder that, after the "Serene Republic" of Venice lost them to Napoleon, the Ionian Islands were then taken by Great Britain, who held them for some years before ceding them to Greece in 1864. Our Imperial system of measurement is still used by the people of Corfu. Cricket, too, is played there, and ginger-beer, drunk from old-fashioned stone bottles, is an unusual feature of this otherwise thoroughly Mediterranean island.

Corfu is about forty miles in length and twenty miles in breadth at its widest point. To the north there is the rocky, mountainous scenery so typical of the Greek islands, with tiny villages huddled between towering crags and approachable only on mule-back. The island dips down towards the centre and levels out into cultivated fields. On the eastern side is the lovely bay of Palaio-Kastritsa, a famous beauty spot noted for the delicious giant-lobsters which are caught there. Corfu is a paradise

for those who enjoy splendid scenery and good food: there are no better fruit, red mullet-fish, olive oil or flowers to be found anywhere in Greece.

Finally, we come to Crete, largest and most historic of all Greek islands. For Europeans it is the end of Europe. No less than seven thousand years ago there was a fully developed civilisation here, created by people who were the first sailors and city-dwellers of the Mediterranean known to history. From the ruins of the great Palace of Knossos it has been possible to reconstruct a picture of what this civilisation was like, thanks largely to the work of the English archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans. But first let us look at Crete to-day and at its people.

A first impression is awe at the rugged, fierce, almost tragic appearance of the countryside. Cliffs rise steeply from the shore; mountain peaks, topped with snow, soar majestically skyward; the caves are huge and dark. The Cretans live up to their surroundings. They seem to accept the challenge of all this overwhelming grandeur and meet it with a daredevil swagger. They are a vital, energetic people, proud to such an extent that, like the Corsicans, they fight out family vendettas remorselessly over generations. The Cretan respects only the man who can fire a gun with better accuracy than his neighbour. During the war the German troops were content to leave the remoter villages well alone, for the narrow gorges and jagged cliffs lend themselves admirably to the Cretans' skill in guerilla warfare.

The chief town is Herakleion. It is a broad, sprawling collection of buildings which includes

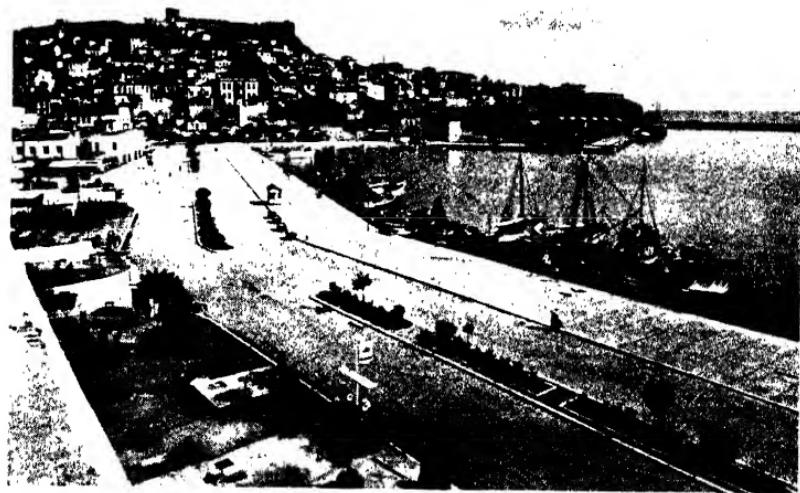
a magnificent Gothic cathedral. Apart, however, from a massive Venetian gate let into the western wall, there is little else of interest. The old town of Canea presents a more vivacious appearance. It is a picturesque jumble of Venetian belfries and Turkish minarets set in a typically southern landscape of olive trees and distant mountains. The streets are crowded with carts and buses carrying peasants who have come up from the villages to sell produce in the covered market. Another important town is Rethymnon, but far more quiet and peaceful. Its Turkish houses, with latticed shutters closed tight to keep the heat out, drowse quietly under the strong sunshine. In the cool of the evening everyone comes to life. The citizens stroll up and down the streets enjoying the air, and the cafés fill up with thirsty customers. Across the harbour bay twinkle the lamps of the night-fishers as they set out in line after line of rowing-boats to see what the catch will be. High above the town of Rethymnon rises the impressive citadel, built by the Venetians as a fortress when Crete, too, was a colony of the Serene Republic.

Crete is the first home of Greek civilisation. The people who lived here all those thousands of years ago are called Minoan, after the legendary King Minos who built a labyrinth and imprisoned the monster known as the Minotaur there, feeding him with luckless captives until the hero Theseus destroyed him. But, legend apart, the researches of Sir Arthur Evans have shown that the Minoans were a remarkably highly civilised people. Even their systems of drainage and ventilation were very "modern". The Palace of Knossos was

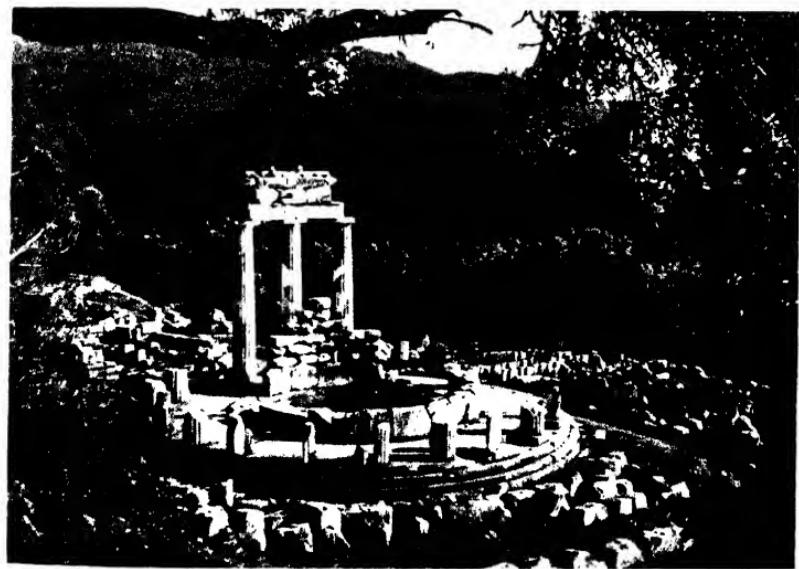
decorated with vivid murals and friezes done in harsh reds, blues and blacks, depicting religious ceremonies. The Minoan king was also high priest of the Minoan religion and presided over the rites at which bulls were sacrificed. The bull seems to have been an object of reverence, as the cat was to the ancient Egyptians, and many of the murals show young men exercising themselves in a strange sport of "bull-leaping". Women, too, took part in this. They wore elaborate clothes and make-up.

The Palace of Knossos extends for some five and a half acres. When first discovered, it contained art treasures of amazing richness and variety. The ruins reveal a fascinating picture of a cultured, luxury-loving and intelligent people. Yet one day, when it was least expected, a sudden earthquake brought the roof of this fabulous building toppling down and shattered its proud pillars for ever. Its treasures lay in the dust, gradually buried by soil-movements over the centuries, forgotten and ignored until the beginning of this century, when Sir Arthur Evans first laid bare the riches of this marvellous civilisation. To-day its noble ruins, ringed by Cephalonian fir trees, overlook a modest village that nestles in the valley below.

But the Cretans, proud of their long history, are not given to living in the past. Tough and independent, they confidently face the rigours of their native land. Their national costume is a good accompaniment to their nature. On festive occasions they wear traditional baggy breeches and black top-boots. Over a black shirt, comes a royal-blue double-breasted waistcoat with a scarlet-



THE PORT OF GAVALLA IN THIRACE



DELPHI THE SHIRNE OF ATHENA PRONAIA



THE ISLAND OF PAROS



GORGES AT BERROEA IN MACEDONIA

lined cloak flung dashingly over the shoulders. A jaunty red fez tops off the outfit, and a thick silken cummerbund round the waist supports an ivory-hilted dagger in its silver sheath. These Cretans fear no man.

## VI

### THE GOLDEN AGE OF GREECE

HAVE you ever thought that Pythagoras, who has caused many a wrinkled forehead, was once a man who had problems to solve himself? Or that Apollo is noted for other things than his good looks? Every day we use Greek words, Greek ideas and Greek names almost without knowing it. At a time when our early ancestors lived in caves and dressed in animal skins, the Greeks already had their own democratic government, religion, literature, drama, sculpture, architecture—in fact, a civilisation which has never since been surpassed. The classical age of Greece was at its finest from 700 to 250 B.C. and flourished over an area that extended as far as Cyprus on the one side and Sicily on the other. Politically the Greeks were divided into hundreds of little “city-states”, each one vying with the other, so it might seem, to produce the finest art and literature. How, within so few centuries, did the Greeks create a culture that is an unattainable ideal for later men?

One explanation may be that they began at the beginning and took great care in educating their children. The Greeks admired beauty above all other things, so a boy was first taught to recognise beauty wherever he saw it and to reject whatever was ugly. The good things of music and art were not limited only to those who could afford them, but were enjoyed by everyone. The Greek was surrounded by beautiful architecture and sculpture.

He could not help but absorb it, so the teacher's job was easy. The boy was trained to speak well and effectively in public, for the Greeks, especially the Athenians, dearly loved debate, and any man who aspired to public life had to sway audiences who were highly critical of poor speaking or faulty argument. Demosthenes was the greatest orator of all, yet when he was a young man he is said to have suffered from a hopeless stammer. There is a story that, to cure this failing, he used to walk up and down the seashore orating at the waves with a pebble in his mouth.

The Greek boy received a good all-round education. Besides learning about art and literature, he was taught to play the lyre and accompany himself in song. But, unfortunately, we have little trace to-day of the music which he sung and played. Some arithmetic and geometry were added to his syllabus, but in order to avoid becoming a book-worm, he practised athletics and was careful to keep himself physically fit. With such an education, is it any wonder that the Greeks as a nation were so intelligent and so artistic?

In many departments of intellectual life we still find to-day that the Greeks were first. Our alphabet is an example. The Greeks developed their alphabet from the Phoenicians', which read alternately from left to right and right to left. The Romans copied theirs (as they did many other things) from the Greeks, and that is the alphabet we use to-day, with some further additions. In science the Greeks were well ahead. Pythagoras and Euclid led the way, and most of the terms now used in geometry are Greek in origin. They went on to optics and

trigonometry, evolving theories and principles with such completeness that they remain unchanged to this day. There was little that did not interest the Greeks. They studied the problems of health and illness, seeking to understand the ways of nature and discover its laws. One of the world's greatest physicians was Hippocrates, whose ideals and methods of treatment form the basis of the modern doctor's conduct and who is remembered in the Hippocratic oath which is still sworn by doctors in many schools of medicine.

Sometimes the ancient Greeks turned from the present to the past, and used the lessons gained from studying the actions of their forefathers to help them face the problems of the future. Herodotus is sometimes called the "Father of History". He draws a fascinating picture of the Persian invasions, made even more vivid by his account of contemporary life. Another famous historian, Thucydides, wrote a history of the Peloponnesian War that is in itself a brilliant study of the motives that influence men and nations.

Turning from history to the world around them, the Greeks probed into the structure of the universe. The theory of Democritus, that all things are derived from the four elements of earth, water, air and fire, was accepted for many centuries until the beginning of modern chemistry in the seventeenth century. Then the enquiring Greek mind busied itself with man and how he should live. The philosophers engaged in long discussions about life and death, rules of conduct, and the duty of man in this world. Socrates, whose physical ugliness is proverbial yet whose conversation delighted all who heard it, was

a keen seeker after truth. It was the fashion for young disciples to gather round the master and listen to his wonderful talk as he expounded his philosophy under some shady tree in Athens. Plato laid down a scheme for the ideal republic and Aristotle drew up rules to govern drama. After them came the Stoicks, the Epicureans and the Sceptics: schools of philosophers whose names have now become everyday words.

Of Greek pictorial art little remains, except for pictures and designs painted on vases, but the sculptures they have left give ample proof of their genius. Above all they aimed at perfect simplicity, without frills or fuss. And how difficult that is to achieve! If you have ever tried to write a letter that expressed exactly what you meant, no more, no less, you will have some idea of the struggle involved. It means constant pruning and polishing, rejecting whatever falls short of the ideal. Sternly self-critical, allowing themselves only the highest standards, the Greek sculptors gave to their statues and friezes a grace and serenity which still move us to-day, just as they moved people several thousand years ago. It is the same with their architecture. The temples, houses and theatres are perfect of their type; all are designed in accordance with the Greek conception of fitness and harmony. Here there is no unnecessary ornamentation—they would have been horrified by Victorian furniture!—and if one little detail were changed, the whole thing would be ruined. In their architecture they attained the simplicity of genius.

However original a modern novelist may think his ideas are, you may be pretty sure they have

featured at one time or another in Greek literature and drama. The Greeks explored all the passions and emotions experienced by man as he travels through life. Their drama first developed out of religious ceremonies held at Athens, consisting of dances and choruses in honour of the god Dionysus. Then a reciter was introduced to fill in detail. The dramatist *Æschylus* added a second, and this was the beginning of the Greek drama as we know it.

The theatres were always in the open air, with seats cut out of the hillside so that each spectator could see what was going on without having his view interrupted. Later on, more elaborate theatres were built, in which even to-day the acoustics are so good that it is possible to hear a sentence whispered on the stage back in the farthest row, although the drama itself remained simple and direct. The chorus played an important part, commenting on the action as the principal actors (the "protagonists") unfolded the story. For the Greeks there were only two types of drama, tragedy and comedy. In tragedy such weighty subjects as man and his fate were discussed, and Sophocles, who added a third actor to the drama, is still one of the world's greatest writers of tragedy. He showed men as he thought they ought to be, writing his tragedies to inspire people to nobler lives. Euripides, however, the third of the great trio of Greek tragedians, was more down-to-earth and showed men as they really are.

While Greek tragedy is concerned with the problems of humanity, Greek comedy is a boisterous, uproarious affair that verges on farce and is

no respecter of persons. Aristophanes poked fun at everything and everybody, including the rather solemn Æschylus, and his “gags” are so good that modern comedians often use them—without having any idea that they are doing so.

With few examples to guide them, the Greeks invented many different forms of literature, and it is in this field of human activity that they have no equals. Besides the drama, they introduced different forms of poetry—pastoral, didactic, lyric, epic, the elegy, the ode, and the epigram. To prose they brought history and oratory, essay and fable, the dialogue and the scientific treatise. Their best poetic work includes Homer's two famous epic poems: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Homer, blind poet whose origin is so obscure that seven cities claimed to be his birth-place, lived three centuries before the Golden Age. But his works were still read and studied at Athens in the heyday of her power.

The *Iliad* tells the story of the ninth and last year of the Trojan war; of Achilles' great fight with Hector and of his quarrel over the division of the spoils with Agamemnon. Nearly three thousand years later, archaeologists digging on the site of Troy discovered how accurate were Homer's descriptions of the warriors and their way of life which he describes.

Even better known is the *Odyssey*, which tells of the wanderings of Odysseus (Ulysses is his Latin name). This story is full of marvellous adventures. Odysseus sets sail from Troy on the long voyage home to the island of Ithaca. On the way he is tempted to stay with the Lotus-eaters, but he overcomes the desire to spend his days in sloth. He

battles with Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant, and evades his terrible clutches by tying himself and his crew under the bellies of Polyphemus' sheep. Then he comes to the island of Circe the enchantress; she falls in love with him and tries to keep him. But he finally rebuffs her advances, and those of the sweet-tongued Sirens, and succeeds in steering his perilous way between Scylla and Charybdis.

Odysseus eventually returns to Ithaca, and, disguised as a beggar, finds his home filled with suitors for the hand of his faithful wife Penelope, who still refuses to believe, after ten years, that her husband is dead. After an heroic fight with the suitors—Odysseus armed only with his bow against a band of warriors using swords—he is finally re-united with her and everyone lives happily ever after.

So ends the greatest epic poem that has yet been written. It was also the first. The Greeks of the Golden Age who read his work honoured the memory of Homer just as they respected the achievements of their own great poets, dramatists, sculptors, artists and thinkers. Only the best, the most beautiful, impressed them. That is why the heritage bequeathed by the Golden Age of Greece is known and cherished in all parts of the civilised world.

## VII

### THE SPLENDOURS OF BYZANTIUM

SOME four hundred years before Christ, the city-states of Greece were conquered by Alexander the Great, a brilliant warrior-king from Macedonia. In a series of lightning attacks on the countries whose shores looked on to the eastern Mediterranean he built up a huge empire, and sowed the seeds of Greek culture over a great area of the world. He was one of the finest generals of all time, yet he died at the age of thirty-three. When he had occupied all the countries near by, legend says that he sat down and wept because there were no more empires to conquer! He possessed a famous horse called Bucephalus which carried him victoriously through many battles.

Two centuries later the Romans came to Greece. Their conquest brought them into contact with Greek civilisation from which they learnt and adopted much. So it was sometimes said that victorious Rome was herself conquered by the Greece she had beaten! While the Romans looted Greek art treasures and fell under the influence of Greek thought, the Greeks themselves were shaking off their old superstitions and embracing the new faith of Christianity. Many of the early Christian martyrs who were thrown to the lions in Rome were Greeks. All the Gospels were written in Greek and St. Paul addressed his epistles to the people of Greek communities—of Corinth, Ephesus and

Thessalonica. When the Emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity, he decided to establish a new capital for the eastern half of the Roman Empire. He decided on the Greek city of Byzantium, which he rebuilt and renamed Constantinople after himself.

The city of Constantinople was founded in A.D. 325, one of the most important dates in the history of the world. It marks the beginning of a wonderful period of art, called Byzantine, and also meant the recognition of Christianity as an acceptable religion by the state. When the western Latin half of the Roman Empire was being sacked and destroyed by invading barbarians, the eastern Greek half was flourishing under the guidance of the Emperors of Constantinople. Here, where the waters of the Sea of Marmora join the Black Sea, a rich and prospering civilisation was going from strength to strength.

Byzantine art began its great period under the rule of the Emperor Justinian I during the sixth century. Italy had sunk into semi-obscurity, and it was Constantinople's turn to shine. Artists and sculptors took classical models and recreated them with a new feeling of adventure and experiment. Architects competed with each other to see who could build the most beautiful church to the greater glory of God. They used every type of ornamentation they could think of and varied their plans with circles, crosses, rounded arches, domes and exquisitely rich mosaics. A mosaic is a pattern or picture made of small stones or pieces of glass cemented together. When made by a clever artist they have a most exquisite appearance. The

Byzantine artists took as their subjects the Virgin Mary, Jesus, the various Saints, and scenes from the Bible—Old Testament and New. On the walls of Byzantine churches, especially in domes and apses, the glittering colours of the mosaics take up the light and throw it back with effects of special beauty.

The Emperor Justinian I is perhaps the greatest art-patron in history. It was he who gave orders for building the wonderful cathedral church of St. Sophia in Constantinople. It still stands to-day, fifteen hundred years later, and some people regard it as the greatest achievement of Christian art. When it was completed, Justinian went in to view the work that had been done, and said in awe, "Glory be to God, who has found me worthy to finish so great a work, and to excel thee, O Solomon." Some people say that whereas the Parthenon represents perfection, complete in itself, St. Sophia gives a hint of mystery, of man's search for the final meaning of life. It is the world's finest masterpiece of Byzantine art. It may also be said to have played its part in converting Russia to Christianity, for when the envoys sent by King Vladimir to report on the Orthodox faith saw it, they were so impressed by the interior of St. Sophia that they spared no effort to impress Vladimir in turn!

Besides creating the splendid paintings and mosaics which adorn the walls of their churches, Byzantine artists specialised in producing beautiful manuscripts. Often several monks would work together on a manuscript, one painting in the decorative chapter headings, another tracing the

actual letters of the script, and yet another drawing the illustrations. These manuscripts, mostly on parchment, show scenes from the lives of the Saints, or events recorded in the Bible. One famous manuscript that has come down to us is coloured purple. The writing on it is done in gold letters, with delicate illustrations stretching across the bottom of the page in vivid colour. There are several copies of the Gospels, all of which make lavish use of gold so that the costumes in the illustrations stand out more boldly. Around the pages run highly ornamental borders picked out in dazzling colours. Locked away in their cells and studies, the Byzantine monks worked on these priceless old manuscripts as a labour of love.

Another favourite artistic activity in which the citizens of Constantinople excelled was weaving textiles. From the royal looms at Constantinople came wonderful examples of the weaver's art: royal robes, ceremonial shrouds, and priestly vestments in rich variety. There is a story that in the sixth century some Persian monks sold the secret of making silk to courtiers of Justinian. The introduction of silk gave the weavers even greater scope for making magnificent robes of every description. Preserved in the Vatican to-day is a splendid silk showing the Annunciation and the Nativity in a series of circles on a gold ground. Other colours are brown, white and green, while the throne on which the Madonna sits is brilliantly jewelled. Later the weavers went so far as to ornament the robes they made not only with gems and precious stones but with exquisite little enamel medallions.

To-day there are several examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Few pieces of Byzantine pottery and glassware have survived. As in most Byzantine art, many of the glass vessels were decorated with religious emblems. Often the base was ornamented with little figures in gold leaf, while the neck itself was slim and tapering. The pottery made use of lavish colour and complicated patterns.

Both politically and artistically the Emperor Justinian's rule brought prosperity to the Byzantine Empire. His aim was to win back all the lands once ruled by his forebears which had been occupied by the barbarian invaders. He succeeded in driving the Goths from Italy and the Vandals from Africa. The boundaries of the Empire now enclosed an area as large as the old Roman Empire had ever known. But the vast sums of money spent by Justinian made things difficult for his successors. While Justinian's reign was a glorious period, and saw a fine flowering of art, religion, government and trade, it was very expensive. The Emperors who followed him could not hope to rival his magnificence. More serious still, people of the Islamic faith, notably the Arabs, were growing stronger and knocking at the gates of the Byzantine Empire. In the eighth century Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the West, and this meant the growth of a new empire in Europe. With the disagreement between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches in 1054, Constantinople was still further estranged from Western nations. But the eleventh century was one of prosperity. The rulers were fabulously rich and lived in palaces built for the last word in

luxury. Churches were filled with rich treasures and the arts reached a new peak of perfection.

The first blow came in the twelfth century, when the Crusaders from the West, under such leaders as Richard Lion-Heart, began to capture Byzantine territories. By the fifteenth century the Empire was in a sad state. It had grown much smaller and consisted of little more than Constantinople, a few islands in the *Ægean* Sea, Salonica and some lands bordering on the Sea of Marmora. The splendid palaces of the Emperors lay in ruins and plunderers carried off many of the finest treasures.

Meanwhile, slowly but surely, the Turks were beginning to lay the foundation of their own great empire. From the East they reached northern Greece. Then the sultan set up his capital at Adrianople in near-by Thrace. Serbia and Bulgaria were brought under control and Salonica was occupied. Finally, in 1453, the Turks attacked Constantinople, laid siege to it, and then looted the city. The Byzantine Empire had ended.

But before the memories of Byzantine glory had passed completely away they did give inspiration to one of Europe's greatest painters. This was a man named Domenico Theotocopolos, later known by his Spanish nickname of *El Greco* ("The Greek"), who was born in Crete about 1541. He studied art under Titian and settled in Spain. His paintings clearly reflect the Byzantine tradition, particularly in his interpretation of his religious subjects and his vivid colour schemes.

When Constantinople fell, nearly all Greece was soon under Turkish rule, and was to remain so for almost four centuries. Even so, the trials and

tribulations of the Greek people were not yet over, for they saw their land fought over by Frankish crusaders and by Catalans, Venetians and Genoese during those years, as well as by the Turks.

The Empire established by the Turks after the fall of Constantinople was known as the Ottoman Empire, after the man (Ottoman or Osman) who founded it. Its power gradually increased until it reached its highest point in the fifteen hundreds under Suleiman the Magnificent. Yet the position of the Greeks became worse. They were tyrannised by Turkish landlords and forced to pay heavy taxes. Every four years one-fifth of their young men were rounded up and sent off to be educated in the Moslem faith in order to give the Sultan a standing army called the Janissaries. Athens degenerated into an obscure provincial village. Then, towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire started to lose its impetus, and some of its subjects began to be granted more freedom. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Greece was, by comparison with others, one of the more flourishing and prosperous of the Ottoman possessions, thanks largely to the Greek gift for commerce and shipping.

Some historians say that one of the virtues of the Turks eventually led to the end of their imperial power: their tolerance of the religions of other peoples. They allowed the Greek Orthodox Church a large measure of freedom and usually (though by no means always) treated its head, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and its Bishops with respect. The Greek Bishops were learned men, and under their guidance Greek influence spread again throughout

the lands ruled from Constantinople. Business was again transacted in the Greek language, and to speak Greek was the sign of a gentleman. Ambitious Greek ministers attained high rank under the Ottoman administration and used their important posts as a means to political intrigue against the ruling Turks. As the Greeks became more and more powerful, so their ambitions for total independence of the Turks increased. Always proud of their ancient culture, impatient of the less civilised (as they thought) Turks who ruled over them, they were naturally eager to govern themselves again. There came a time when they could bear it no longer, and in the eighteen-twenties they took the final step. The War of Independence that followed is described in the next chapter.

## VIII

### THE MODERN GREEK STATE

THE 25th March is an important date for the modern Greeks. On that day, in 1821, the Archbishop of Patras hoisted the national flag and proclaimed the revolution against Turkish rule. For nearly four centuries the Turks—whose Empire once stretched from the gates of Vienna to the Persian Gulf—had occupied and governed Greece. The Greeks had already made one big attempt to win their freedom in 1770, but were suppressed with great ferocity by Turkish troops. Since that time large numbers of outlaws, the “Klephths”, had taken to the mountains and were living in open rebellion in remote districts where the Turks could not hunt them down.

At first, other countries did not officially interfere in the Greek revolution, although in western Europe there was great sympathy for the Greeks. From England, France and other countries, volunteers flocked to help them, attracted by their love of freedom and by their glorious past. Best known of these “philhellenes”, as they were called, was the poet Lord Byron, who died at Missolonghi in 1821. Later Sir Richard Church took command of the Greek army and Lord Cochrane of the navy.

At the beginning of the revolt, thanks to their skill at sea, the Greeks seemed to have the advantage over their Turkish masters. Turkish atrocities, which included hanging the Patriarch of Constantinople on Easter Day, only served to harden

their determination to be free. But the war then began to turn against them until 1827, when Russia, England and France decided to help Greece in her struggle. In that year the Battle of Navarino was fought and the Turkish fleet, helped by the Egyptians, was totally destroyed by the Allies. In addition, the Greeks inflicted heavy losses on the Turks in a battle near Thebes, and the French threatened to invade the Peloponnese. Turkey at last recognised that further attempts to hold Greece were impossible, and, by the Treaty of Adrianople, agreed that Greece should be free. After much suffering and bloodshed, and centuries of tyranny, the Greeks were now again masters of their own country. There was much to be done.

Who, to begin with, should be King? Offers were made to several others who refused the honour before the crown was finally accepted by Otto, a Bavarian prince, who became the first King of modern Greece in 1835. He brought with him numbers of German officials and courtiers who became increasingly unpopular, and so did he. He persistently refused Greek demands for a freer government until, in 1843, he was forced to dismiss some of his German officials and agree to a more democratic system. The National Assembly then set up a form of parliamentary government, and in 1862 Otto was obliged to abdicate his throne. In the course of this first monarchy of modern Greece there was some unrest inside the country and her frontiers were not yet fully settled. When Otto left the Greeks first asked to have an English prince as their new King, but in the end accepted the Allies' recommendation: Prince George of Denmark.

His sister had recently married the heir to the English throne, so there was a strong link with Great Britain. To emphasise the democratic nature of the new monarchy, King George was formally proclaimed with the title "King of the Hellenes": the ancient name by which the Greek peoples were known. During his long reign of fifty years this devoted and popular man saw the gradual development of the modern Greek state.

From the death of King George I until the Great War of 1914 the history of Greece is a long story of frontier wars and the liberation of more and more new districts from foreign rule. In Thessaly and southern Epirus there were risings against the Turks, and discussion of their future dragged on until 1881, when they were finally allowed to become part of the Greek Kingdom. Then there was trouble in Crete, which was still under Turkish rule, and Greek troops landed there with the intention of occupying the island. But an international force took over, the Turks withdrew, and for a time Crete had her own Government under a Greek High Commissioner, before she at last joined her mother country. Towards the end of the century, Greece was again at war with Turkey, and nearly lost control of Thessaly. Meanwhile, the Christians in Macedonia, still under Turkish control, were becoming restive, and one result of this new threat to the Turkish Empire was the formation of a Turkish revolutionary movement, the "Young Turks". Among its leaders was a young man who had been born at Salonica, called Mustapha Kemal, who later became the founder of the modern Turkish Republic.

The liberation of Crete marked the first stage in the career of another young politician who was destined to be one of the world's most famous statesmen. Born in Crete and educated in Athens, Eleftherios Venizelos first became Greek Prime Minister in 1910. Supported by a strong majority, he established democratic government on a firm footing and reorganised the army and navy. He set about clearing corruption from the administration and improved the lot of the poor. His greatest achievement at this time was to free all the remaining territory which now forms part of Greece (except the Dodecanese) from Turkish rule. The Balkan Wars that ensued brought many Greek victories. While the Turks were occupied with other troubles, argued Venizelos, let us all band together and rid the Balkans of them. Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians forgot their differences and joined in the Balkan League under his direction. The common enemy was defeated. Unfortunately, Bulgaria wanted what the others considered was more than her fair share of the territories freed from the Turks, so that Greece and Serbia, supported by Rumania, now had to fight against the Bulgarian Army. But this second Balkan war only lasted a month and brought defeat to Bulgaria.

On the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, many Greeks favoured the cause of France, Great Britain and Russia, as these three countries had in the past given Greece help and protection. But their views were not shared by the new Greek king, Constantine, the son of the popular George I who had been assassinated in 1913 by a madman as he entered Salonica. The new king was educated



MACEDONIAN GIRL IN TRADITIONAL LOCAL DRESS



MACEDONIAN GIRL AT WORK WITH TOBACCO LEAVES

in Germany and had married the Kaiser's sister, so his pro-German views led to disagreement with Venizelos. Relations between them became so bad that Venizelos retired, first to his native Crete and then to Salonica, where he set up a separate revolutionary government which joined the Allies in the war. Eventually, King Constantine was forced to abdicate and Greece was reunited.

At the Peace Conference after the war, Venizelos was the chief representative of Greece. By the Treaty of Sèvres, in 1920, he won for his country large areas of land which she claimed from Turkey, including the district of Smyrna across the *Ægean* Sea in Asia Minor. Venizelos returned home happy, only to find that in his absence a strong faction had grown up against him and that his popularity was waning. Defeated in elections, he resigned, and King Constantine came back from exile. By now, Turkey had changed her mind and refused to agree to the Treaty of Sèvres which was so favourable to Greece. The Greek Government decided to force Turkey's hand, and a strong expedition set out for Smyrna, not only to protect the Greeks who lived there, but also to press on and capture Ankara, the new capital of Turkey. Perhaps, hoped some Greeks, we shall do even better and capture Constantinople itself.

Nothing but disaster came of this expedition. All the Greeks' fond dreams were shattered by a crushing defeat of their troops just when they hoped Ankara would fall into their hands. None of the great Powers answered their appeals for help, and, in fact, Italy and France armed and encouraged the Turks. Even Smyrna was lost and burnt to the

ground. With difficulty, the remnants of the Greek armies and thousands of fleeing civilians made their way to safety across the *Ægean* Sea. King Constantine went into exile again in Sicily, an unhappy and disillusioned man.

A new Treaty, the Treaty of Lausanne, then settled the opposing claims of Greece and Turkey, giving little advantage to the Greeks. They now found themselves beset with all sorts of problems, among the gravest of which was the plight of no fewer than one and a quarter million Greek refugees from areas ruled by Turkey who poured into the country. For these Greeks, suddenly uprooted from lands where they had lived for generations, new homes and work had to be found in a country which already had some difficulty in supporting its population. It was an immense task; and it is one of the great triumphs of the modern Greeks that they bravely faced and overcame it.

In the 1920's and '30's, the politics of Greece were changeable and complicated. A Republic was declared again in 1924 with Venizelos as Prime Minister once more. A short dictatorship was followed by four more years under Venizelos, another dictatorship, a military and naval revolt in 1935, and finally the restoration of the monarchy in 1936. That year, too, saw the death of Venizelos in Paris. The veteran Cretan was mourned as a fine patriot by his own countrymen and as a great international statesman by the rest of the world. He had been Prime Minister no fewer than eight times.

King George II now sat on the throne of Greece. But a new dictator was waiting to seize power.

General Metaxas, leader of a small independent group of M.P.s became Prime Minister when neither of the two main parties in Parliament could win a majority. Inspired by the models of nazism and fascism, he used this position to strengthen his hand and his chance came in the summer of 1936, when the threat of a general strike gave him his excuse. With the King's consent, he declared a state of emergency, abolished Parliament and made himself the absolute ruler of Greece. He set up a large and powerful secret police and a censorship that allowed only favourable comments on the Government to be published. But though many of his ideas were copied from Hitler and Mussolini, Metaxas' system was less harsh (perhaps partly because it was less efficient) than the dictatorships in Germany and Italy. The quick-witted Greek citizens sometimes found it hard to take Metaxas seriously, and the fate of those who criticised the dictator did not prevent them from making jokes about him and his government. Meanwhile, Greece's relations with neighbouring Balkan countries (except Bulgaria) became closer, and she was also on better terms with Turkey.

But it was only with the outbreak of the Second World War that many Greeks gave Metaxas their willing support. Italy had invaded Albania early in 1939. In October 1940 she demanded the right to send troops across the frontier into Greece. By now all Europe lay at the mercy of Italy and Germany and only Britain was still free and fighting. But General Metaxas stood firm. And it was then, perhaps for the first time, that he won the whole-hearted backing of the Greek people. Even his

bitterest political enemies forgot their differences and rallied to defend their homeland.

At first, the Greeks won a whole series of striking victories, driving the Italians back into the Albanian mountains. Then, in the spring of 1941, Hitler's German armies came to the Italians' rescue. After a heroic campaign—in which the Greeks were joined by British and Commonwealth troops—the defending armies were defeated and Greece came under enemy occupation. The King and Government escaped abroad.

But inside Greece the struggle still went on. For more than three and a half years, guerilla fighters in the mountains and saboteurs in the towns kept the spirit of resistance alive, until both Germany and Italy were defeated and Greece once more became free. Even then there were still grim troubles to be faced: a Communist rebellion led to a long and fierce civil war which only finally ended in some parts of Greece in 1950.

Since then, with help from Britain and America, Greece has gradually rebuilt her beautiful but devastated country and began to make good the terrible damage done by ten grim years of war, occupation and civil strife. Now, if only she is allowed at last to live in peace, she can look forward confidently to the future.

## IX

### THE HOLY MOUNTAIN AND THE CHURCH

EAST of Salonica, jutting down into the *Æ*gean Sea, is a peninsula shaped like a trident, the Chalcidice. The most eastern of its three prongs carries a towering mountain 6,000 feet high, which can be seen for many miles. This is Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain of Greece. It owes its name to the fact that several thousand monks live there in isolation, worshipping and following a pattern of life laid down hundreds of years ago. Mount Athos is actually a little self-governing republic, cut off from the outside world and ruled by the monks themselves. No female, either human or animal, is allowed to set foot on its ground, and travellers must obtain special permission before paying a visit. The mountain is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who is reputed to have been there after the Crucifixion, but since that time no woman has ever landed.

There are twenty monasteries on Mount Athos, each being represented on the mountain's ruling council by a monk. A committee of four of its members makes up the executive, which is led by a president. Since the tenth century the council has met to guide the affairs of Athos in the little village of Karyes. The mountain is, of course, part of the land of Greece, but the Greek Government is content to allow the monks to look after themselves. All the monasteries, of which the most modern was

built in 1545, contain rich treasures of Byzantine art and invaluable historic documents. These manuscripts give a wonderful picture of political, social and church life in Greece and the Levant, beginning in the tenth century, although unfortunately Turkish soldiers looted some of the parchments and used them for making cartridges during the Greek War of Independence. Despite such acts of vandalism and other thoughtless plundering, the monks guard what remains of their treasures with jealous care.

Most of the monasteries are to be found clustered around the coast, often perched on top of precipitous cliffs and seeming to hang suspended in mid-air. They are all fortified and usually consist of a central church in a quadrangle. Viewed from the sea, they look very romantic, an effect which is increased by the wild and lovely scenery. The majority of the monks are Greek, though three of the monasteries are lived in by Serbs and Russians. The monks belong to one of two "rules": the cenobitic or the idiorrhythmic. The cenobitic monks live very severely, attending service eight hours a day, eating only the bare minimum of food, and sharing all their belongings with each other, since none of them is allowed to own any property whatever. The idiorrhythmic monks, on the other hand, live rather more like the dons of an English college. They enjoy a greater freedom, and can even have a servant if they can afford one. When they are not praying or taking part in religious services, they busy themselves with farming, fishing and handicrafts and, like all their fellow-Greeks, they are extremely hospitable and delight in political

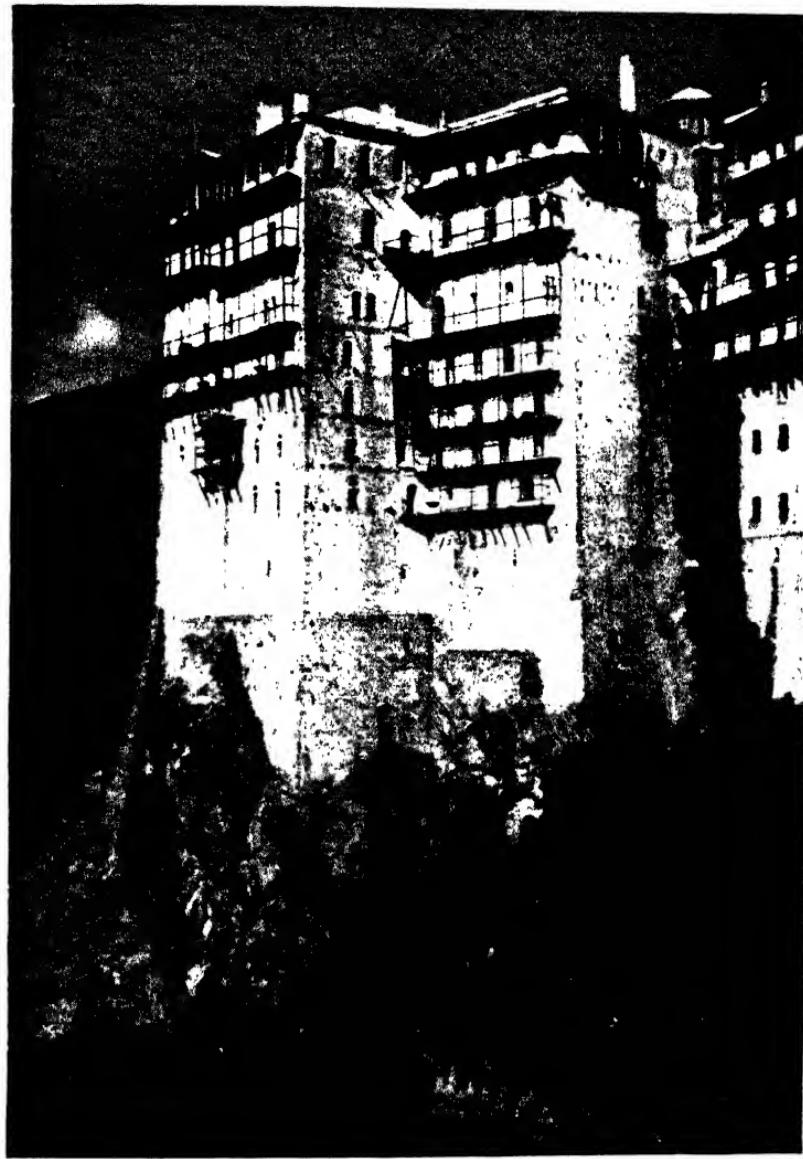
or religious discussion with any traveller who happens to call. Their reasons for having decided to cut themselves off from the rest of humanity vary from monk to monk. One may have had an unfortunate love-affair and seeks to forget it, another may have been unsuccessful in everyday life and prefer Mount Athos for the peace of mind it brings. Another may have chosen the monastery because he was alone in the world and had no one to care for him. Yet others have become monks simply because they felt a vocation and have dedicated themselves to the worship of God.

Whatever the reasons that brought them to Athos, once they are there the monks can face life placidly and without fear of the future. They are free from many of the cares that distract people in the outer world. Though their numbers are dwindling, though few young recruits are coming forward, and they sometimes cannot afford to repair all the crumbling buildings around them, they go on their peaceful way without undue worry. Even freer from worldly troubles are the hermits and holy men who live completely alone in caves and huts throughout Mount Athos. Some even manage to exist on ledges and in clefts in the rock.

The peninsula of the Holy Mountain is forty miles long, with a breadth that varies from four to seven miles, the whole area belonging to the monasteries. The customs and institutions of Athos date from the Middle Ages, and even the time of day is told in the old Byzantine way, with one o'clock at sunrise. Some of the monks seem hardly to realise that there is no longer an Emperor at Constantinople.

The monks of Athos, and of the many other old monasteries of Greece, all belong to the Orthodox Church. Apart from some Roman Catholics in the Ionian and Cyclades islands, and a very few Protestants, almost all other Greeks also belong to this denomination which is the established national religion. The Orthodox Community covers a wide area with its centre still in the ancient city of Constantinople, now renamed by the Turks Istanbul. Its head, as in the days of the Byzantine Empire, is the Patriarch of Constantinople who is recognised as the chief religious dignitary by a number of independent national orthodox churches including, among others, those of Russia, Poland, Finland, Serbia, Bulgaria, Syria and Egypt, as well as Greece.

Seventeen hundred years ago the Roman Emperor Constantine had a vision of a shining cross in the sky on the eve of a great battle. Below the cross are said to have shone the words "in this sign conquer". He went out to battle on the following day, was victorious, and became converted to Christianity. The first Christian Emperor then moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium. He made of it the great centre of Christianity in the East. The Bishop of Constantinople, henceforward known as Patriarch, claimed equal status with the Pope of Rome. From Constantinople went priests and missionaries, spreading the new Christian gospel in all the surrounding countries and especially to the north. Soon many of the Slavs were converted. The Orthodox Church's greatest success was the conversion of Russia which began in A.D. 987, when a son of the Russian ruler married



A MONASTERY ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF ATHOS



THE SEA FRONT AND THE WHITE TOWER AT SALONICA  
(*Pages 23-24*)

the sister of the Greek Emperor, Basil, so paving the way for the introduction of the Orthodox faith into his country.

By the twelfth century Serbs, Bulgarians and Russians all recognised the Patriarch as their head. But by then the Orthodox Church had severed its relations with the Roman Catholics. Changes in doctrine made by Rome were not agreed to at Constantinople, where they were looked on as unnecessary and unwelcome. The disagreement came to a head in 1054, when angry Catholics trooped into the great Cathedral of St. Sophia in Constantinople and placed a document upon the High Altar excommunicating both the Patriarch and his Church, by order of the Pope. The Patriarch, not to be outdone in the matter, retaliated by excommunicating the Pope and *his* Church, and ever since then both religions have gone their separate ways.

The Orthodox Church has survived many eventful years and witnessed the rise and fall of many empires. During the time of the Crusades an attempt was made to re-unite Constantinople and Rome, but the Catholic Crusaders were eventually driven out. Then in the fifteenth century began the long years of Turkish rule under the Ottoman Empire. Though the Turks sacked Constantinople when they took it, destroyed many of its churches and made St. Sophia into a mosque, they did allow the Orthodox Church to practise its own beliefs and sometimes even lent support to the Patriarch in his rivalry with Rome. In this way, though they may not have known it, they kept alive the Greek longing for independence. The priests of the

Church were passionate opponents of the “infidel” Turkish Moslems, were steeped in the traditions of the Greek Empire, and longed for the day when Greece would be free again.

After the War of Independence in the eighteen-twenties, the Orthodox Church came into its own again in Greece. In 1821, when the Greeks revolted against their Turkish overlords, they proclaimed the Orthodox religion to be the national faith, appointing a Government Minister, aided by a committee of bishops, to look after religious affairs. But there were new difficulties ahead. The Patriarch at Constantinople was not easily persuaded to recognise the Greek Orthodox Church as a separate body independent of his direct control, and it was not until 1850 that he finally agreed. Nowadays the Greek Church is governed by a “synod”, or assembly, of bishops, headed by the Archbishop of Athens. There is still a Minister for Religious Affairs (he is also the Minister of Education) and he is the go-between for Church and State. Apart from monks, who must be celibate, and bishops (who are chosen from the monks) all the clergy must be married men.

The local church is always the centre of every village and of each neighbourhood of every town. Little chapels are to be found dotted about the countryside, sometimes in remote, lonely places and often on the sites of ancient pagan temples from whose stones they have been partly built. The Orthodox Christians (unlike the Roman Catholics) must not decorate their churches with statues or images of saints. But they may make and venerate holy pictures. Sometimes a faithful wor-

shipper will be successful in some venture or escape some danger and feel special gratitude to a protecting saint to whose picture he will come and offer gifts. Many churches and monasteries depend on these offerings which the faithful bring them.

The big Christian festivals and Saints Days (of which there are very many) are celebrated everywhere in Greece with great rejoicing. After long services in Church, the worshippers gather for an elaborate midday feast followed by dancing. The musicians play their rhythmical, traditional music while circles of dancers weave deftly round. The old people sit and watch, and often on such occasions parents arrange marriages for their sons and daughters. Though the Greeks are devoutly religious, they take their religion in a happy, uncomplicated spirit, accepting the traditions of their Church without question, impressed by its ritual, and comforted by its prayers.

## X

## LIFE IN THE VILLAGES

WHAT a pleasant picture the Greek village makes! The stone-built, red-tiled cottages, with their neatly whitewashed walls, cluster round the little square where a group of shady plane trees spread their green branches over a bubbling spring. Here, every evening, the women come to fill their earthen-ware pitchers with water as they have done for generations. A group of old men sits near by, at the door of the village coffee-house, peacefully sipping black coffee and talking of times long past. Close at hand is the village church circled by a ring of tall green cypress trees. On feast days, when the men are all resting from their work in the fields, the square resounds with dancing and the singing of old traditional folk-songs.

Villages near the sea are usually built on hill-sides above the coast, because in the old days pirates who sailed the Mediterranean, plundering sea-towns, were unlikely to come far inland. In this way, too, marshes and swamps which caused malarial fevers were avoided.

The villagers live very simply. Nearly all of them, both men and women, work hard on the land, tending their plots or pasturing their sheep and goats. The children, too, soon start to do their share. With his crops and a few head of live-stock, the peasant can often only just manage to keep himself and his family on a very modest standard of living. But loans from the agricultural bank and the

use of new farm machinery (some of it co-operatively owned) is beginning to make his life a little easier.

The men, women and children of the family all live together in their little house, sometimes as many as six sharing only two rooms, with perhaps an extra room for housing animals and stores. From the rafters hang cheeses, sausages and strings of onions. The open fireplace burns wood gathered from the hillsides. In every village house you will always see an ikon, a holy picture of a Saint or the Virgin Mary, with a little oil-lamp in front of it kept burning all the year round. The Greeks regard these ikons as important symbols of their religion, and necessary to keep evil influences from their home.

Attached to the house may be a small garden with a few fruit trees, and a vine spreading gracefully across a trellis. From the roses, some villagers distil the fragrant attar of roses and from their petals make sweet jam. The Greeks are very fond of flowers and below the pomegranate tree in many a village courtyard they blossom in a gay display of colour. Not far off is the oven where the family's bread is made. This is a primitive structure built of baked earth and shaped like a bee-hive. It is heated by burning brush-wood inside until it is glowing with heat. The embers are then raked out and trays of dough are placed in position and left until the bread is ready. The family's daily diet consists chiefly of bread (the most important item), fruit, peas, beans, lentils, goat's milk, olive oil and sometimes eggs. Meat is a rare luxury, both because it is expensive and because it will not keep long in a hot climate.

Out of their own houses, Greek village women

prefer to remain in the background. And they stay at home in the evenings, leaving the taverns and coffee-houses to their menfolk. Large families are more numerous in Greece than here, and yet in addition to looking after the children and doing the housework, women often work on the land at their husband's side. They know how to hoe and weed, how to bring in the harvest, and how to milk goats and sheep. There is never a minute of the day when they are not busy. When no other task calls them, they sit out in the courtyard and spin or weave on the long summer afternoons. As they bend over their looms they sing softly, accompanied by the gentle breeze in the leaves of the vines overhead, heavy with ripening grapes. If there are mulberry trees in the neighbourhood, they can weave silks as well as wool, and everywhere they add to the furnishing of their homes with brightly coloured carpets and blankets.

The life of the Greek peasants may seem hard, but they cheerfully take it for granted. Religious feast-days (of which there are very many throughout the year) give an opportunity for merrymaking which they gladly take, and marriage festivities continue for days. Marriage is, indeed, a very important feature of village life. Almost as soon as a girl is born, her parents start thinking about the dowry which she will bring with her to her future husband. So important is this considered that the unfortunate girl who has no dowry may never get married at all. As soon as she has learnt how, the little girl starts weaving blankets and carpets, embroidering her clothes and collecting up linen for her dowry. This is stored in a stout, ornamented

wooden box which is kept in a special place until the great day when it can be brought forth by the happy bride. Before that time there is much negotiation by the respective parents, whose decision is likely to be influenced by the size of the girl's dowry. But if she has any older sisters, she must wait until they are married before she herself can marry.

When the wedding-day arrives, it is observed with great ceremony. In church, bride and bride-groom wear crowns on their heads and carry lighted candles in their hands during the service. Spectators line up outside the church to shower them with rice when they come out, and the celebrations sometimes go on for days.

Although the villager lives simply, he is often an artistic craftsman. The inside of his house is arranged with a care for appearance as well as comfort, and the household utensils, like the linen, are often decorated with great skill. Since the day of Homer's Penelope, the wife of the much-travelled hero Odysseus, Greek women have always been skilful weavers, and the making of woollen rugs and carpets has been a traditional Greek art. Certain districts are famous for their weaving—around Parnassus the women specialise in many-coloured woollen blankets and rugs, Epirus is noted for its strong broadcloth and saddle-rugs, and from the Peloponnese come fine silks. For colouring, the women used to use natural dyes extracted from plants: brown from the plane tree and red from the holly-oak. Besides their heavier fabrics, they also make fine needlework, lace, sheets and napkins. From some villages, the products of the peasant

women's looms find their way into the fashionable town shops and are sold there to town Greeks and foreign tourists.

The peasant is often an expert wood-carver. The box containing his daughter's dowry is sometimes a little masterpiece of carving and he can turn out a simple cup or an ornate shepherd's crook with equal skill. On some islands good furniture is made, elaborately carved and painted in styles handed down from the days of the Byzantine Empire. Some country-folk work in silver and produce jewellery, bangles, necklaces and earrings. Others make copper urns and hand-beaten bronze trays which decorate big town houses and humble peasant homes alike. Some hand-painted pottery still follows ancient designs, not only large earthen jars but also beautifully executed plates and saucers. In fact, in much of the weaving, pottery and wood-carving of to-day are to be found designs and patterns which reflect those of the very earliest Hellenic civilisation.

In recent years the peasants have had many difficulties and much suffering to bear. First, the enemy occupation during the Second World War and then the guerilla fighting and civil troubles which followed, meant a constant fear of armed raids on their villages, and of atrocities and reprisals. Some peasants were forced to leave their homes altogether and take to the safety of the big towns for years on end. But now the countryside is peaceful once again, and, though their life is still poor and hard, the peasants mostly face their problems with gay good humour. They are a naturally happy people.

Part of their happiness, and of their acceptance of the conditions of their life, comes perhaps from their religion. Throughout the year, their lives are regulated and conditioned by the traditions of their Church. But it is at Easter time that religious celebration reaches a climax throughout the length and breadth of Greece. Many peasants—particularly women—still fast right through Lent, abstaining from eggs, milk, butter, cheese, oil, fish and meat. During Holy Week itself, their example is followed by almost everyone else in the village. On Good Friday, mourning is worn, and all day long the bells toll, while inside the church the women and girls decorate with flowers a sacred pall representing the bier of Christ. After evening service, the bier is borne out by a procession, chanting and carrying candles and led by the priest. They tour their village, stopping seven times on their way for special prayers and blessings, while the congregation stands reverently round. Finally, the procession returns to church and service is continued far into the night.

Saturday dawns with an air of expectancy. The housewives busy themselves preparing for a day of feasting which starts in the early hours of Sunday. The house is spotless and newly whitewashed, and the traditional red-dyed Easter eggs have already been hard-boiled. That evening, churches are packed. Inside and out, the crowds gather, waiting for the priests to announce the joyous news. At last, they hear the gospel which tells how the women go to the sepulchre and hear the Angel saying: "He is not here. He has risen." Then, on the stroke of midnight, the bells ring out, fireworks are let off

(in the old days rifles were fired into the air), and friends and relatives greet each other joyfully. The twinkling lights of thousands of candles and tapers dance through the darkness of the night, and those who manage to take their light back and keep the flame unquenched in an oil lamp for forty days are said to enjoy a particularly happy home. "Christ is risen" is the traditional greeting, to which the reply is "Truly He is risen". Back in their houses, the village people complete their preparations. The lamb is ready for roasting on the spit, and the hungry family is eager to do it full justice. For the rest of Easter Day, there is feasting and drinking, dancing and merrymaking. The long fast is over, and the Greek peasants joyously celebrate the victory of their risen Lord.

## XI

## THE TRAVELLER IN GREECE

IN 1960 the journey from London to Athens took about four flying-hours by air (through Rome), three days and three nights by train (through Paris, Lausanne, Milan, Venice, Zagreb, Belgrade, Skoplje and Salonica), perhaps a week by car (on a variety of routes to and through Yugoslavia), and up to three weeks by cargo steamer from London and other British ports.

The air journey is quick, comfortable, expensive and rather dull . . . except for a brief glimpse of the snow-clad Alps and the towering summit of Mont Blanc and—if the pilot obligingly makes a detour—the sight of Vesuvius from directly above the crater. Travellers by train mostly prefer the famous Orient Express—scene of many an exciting spy story in works of fiction. As the big, blue sleeping-cars rumble across France, under the Alps in the Simplon tunnel, past the north Italian lakes and the Lombardy plain to Yugoslavia, the passenger has time to adjust reactions to the distance of 1,700 miles which separates London from Athens. Late on the last night of the journey, the train draws into the big new station at Salonica where blaring loud-speakers compete with the shouts of railwaymen and the whistles of shunting engines. Here at last is Greece, and when the next morning dawns the train window gives exciting and enchanting views of the gorge of Tempe, the plain of Thessaly, Parnassus and the distant

mountains of Euboea . . . until at last the Express rumbles past the outskirts of the capital and pants to a standstill at the Athens main-line station.

The tourist who is keen on independence and freedom of movement will prefer to come by road; the holiday-maker with plenty of time to spare will choose a route by sea, and other travellers may choose a combination of road or rail and sea or air to meet their fancy or their pocket. All of them will find the same warm and hospitable welcome on arrival—whether they go first to a luxury hotel in a big city, to the inn in a small village, or a monastery in some remote mountain district.

The hotels of Athens and the large towns are mostly comfortable and modern, and there are now good new hotels in several smaller provincial towns as well. But off the beaten track the adventurous visitor must be prepared for less up-to-date accommodation. He may even find himself sharing a simple, whitewashed room with several other people at the local inn, or sleeping not far from goats and mules in some kindly peasant's house. If he is lucky, he may get a room in the home of the village mayor or priest, and the charm and hospitality of his host is likely to make up for any discomfort. He may find simple, peaceful shelter, too, in a monastery or convent. There he will be made welcome by the dignified, bearded abbot, who will treat him as a personal guest and receive him at his table to do the honours of the monastery. In the more important monasteries there are special quarters set aside for visitors. No

charge is made by the monks, but their hospitality is usually recognised by an offering to the church.

In days gone by foreign travellers in Greece often had a much livelier and more dangerous time than their twentieth-century descendants. In the wilder districts, to keep them constantly on the watch, there were bandits whose survivors were not finally cleaned up until after the First World War. Sixteenth-century English merchants, back from Greece, told terrifying tales of their adventures and gave strange descriptions of the people whom they met. Of the Cretans, one English merchant wrote that they were ". . . good archers, everyone with his bow and arrows, a sword and a dagger, with long hair and boots that reach up to their groin, and a shirt of mail, hanging the one half before, and the other half behind. . . . They would drink wine out of all measure." The Cretans are hard drinkers to this day.

In those times English traders were interested mainly in Greece's currants, dried fruits and wines. Malmsey wine (Richard III's brother, the Duke of Clarence, was drowned in a butt of it) became particularly famous in England. It took its name from a corruption of Monemvasia, where the vineyards were situated, a town built on a rock that juts out into the sea from the Peloponnesian coast.

It was from Greece, too, that travellers brought to England the habit of drinking coffee. They reported that it was able "to dry up the crudities of the Stomach, as also to comfort the Brain, to fortify the sight with its steam, and prevent Dropsies, Gouts, the Scurvy, together with the Spleen, and

Hypochondriacal winds (all of which it doth without any violence or distemper at all)”. Probably the Greeks first learnt the habit of drinking coffee from their Turkish masters. But the English travellers took it for a Greek custom; and so one of the most popular coffee-houses of seventeenth-century London was called “The Grecian”.

Towards the end of that century, besides the merchants, a few daring English gentlemen began to travel for curiosity and pleasure in Greece. They were the forerunners of those wealthy noblemen of the eighteenth century, whose classical education made them eager to inspect the land of Greece. Among them was Lord Sandwich (inventor of the sandwich) who was so impressed by the Greeks and their traditional clothes that he took an artist with him specially to draw them. In that century, too, English scholars began to take a workmanlike interest in archæology, and to publish heavy volumes about the ruined antiquities of Greece. Yet the traffic was not all one way, for now young Greeks—specially from Constantinople—started to come abroad to study in European universities, returning home full of new ideas and patriotic notions of ridding their country of the Turks.

English architects came under the influence of Greek buildings, and one architect urged the famous Lord Elgin, British Ambassador at Constantinople during the early years of the last century, to bring back casts and drawings of works of art in Greece. In those days, the Greeks were careless of their national treasures, and they and the Turkish authorities allowed foreigners to take

away stones and sculptures from their ancient sites. Elgin went further than any earlier traveller and bought for £35,000 a most valuable set of sculptures taken from the Parthenon itself. They were shipped to England, shipwrecked on the way, and delayed for some three years before finally arriving. That is how the British Museum in London came to possess what are now known as the Elgin Marbles, which may be seen there to this day.

Dr. Johnson once remarked ". . . the grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great Empires of the world: the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean." As the nineteenth century dawned, more and more people from western Europe began to understand the debt which the modern world owes to Greece. The Englishman who acknowledged that debt most fully was Lord Byron. He was the ideal traveller in Greece. From his earliest boyhood, he read every book that he could lay his hands on about the country, so that when he arrived for the first time, he was already well prepared. Like earlier poets, he called upon the spring of Castalia at Delphi for inspiration; yet for him the old legends were much more than just excuses for empty phrases. With passion, he wrote of "fair Hellas" and lamented her sad state of subjection.

In his poetry, Byron aroused sympathy for Greece by contrasting her enslavement to the Turks with the splendours of her glorious past

Another English poet, Shelley, summed up the heritage of Ancient Greece in the lines:

Her citizens, imperial spirits,  
Rule the present from the past. . . .

Sympathy for the Greeks began to grow. Abroad, even more than in his own country, Byron became popular as the standard-bearer of the Greek War of Independence. And when he died of malaria in Missolonghi, he became the first, and probably the last, Englishman to achieve fame as the national poet of another country. For the Greeks have long since adopted him as one of themselves.

From the days of Byron onward, Greece has won the hearts of thousands of British travellers. Almost every year, the number of her tourists grows. Those who make the journey once usually find it hard to resist the temptation to go back again. For in the fascination of her ruins and her history, the charm and hospitality of her people and the beauty of her countryside . . . in these things the glories of ancient Hellas are still very much alive.

## APPENDIX

### AGRICULTURE

This is the most important activity in Greece and employs more than half the population. Tobacco is the principle product and makes up nearly half the total value of all exports. The chief fruits cultivated are olives, oranges, grapes, lemons, figs, almonds, pomegranates, citrons and currants. Of recent years farmers have concentrated on growing rice, cotton and wheat.

### CURRENCY

The standard coin is the *drachma*. At the 1960 rate of exchange, 84 drachmae = £1.

### EDUCATION

Everybody between the age of 6 and 12 receives free education. There are universities at Athens and Salonica.

### FLAG

The flag of Greece consists of 9 horizontal bands, alternately blue and white. In the corner is a white cross on a blue background.

### GEOGRAPHY

The mainland of Greece covers 41,328 square miles, while the islands cover 9,854 square miles. Greece is divided into 11 main regions: Macedonia (including Mt. Athos), Thrace, Epirus, Thessaly, Continental Greece (including Euboea and the Sporades), the Peloponnese, the Dodecanese, the Cyclades, the Ionian Islands, the eastern Aegean Islands and Crete.

### GOVERNMENT

Since 1821, when she emerged from Turkish domination, Greece has been an independent country. A monarchy till 1924 she then became a Republic. In 1934 she again became a Monarchy with George II as King. To-day, the King of Greece is Paul I, who succeeded his brother George II. Like us, the Greeks have a Parliament, called the *Voulé*, with a Prime Minister and a Cabinet, which they elect at regular intervals by a popular vote.

## LANGUAGE

Modern Greek is very similar to the language of the New Testament. Spoken, its more colloquial form is known as "demotic". Technical and official documents are written in *katharevousa*, a more conventional sort of Greek. Novels and poetry are written in a popular dialect. Famous modern Greek poets are Cavafis, Solomos, Palamas and Sikelianos.

## MANUFACTURES

Certain parts of Greece are rich in minerals such as iron ore, manganese, chrome, bauxite, lead, zinc, etc. These are mined in large quantities. There are many factories which make carpets, glass, cement, boots and shoes, chemicals, textiles (cotton, woollen, silk and rayon garments). The Greeks also have industries concerned with metal products and ship-repairing.

## NATIONAL DAYS

March 25th. On that date, in 1821, the national flag of Greece was first unfurled in defiance of her Turkish rulers.

Ochi Day (October 28th), the anniversary of the rejection of Mussolini's ultimatum in 1940, is also a National Day.

## RELIGION

More than 96% of the people belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, which is the official religion of the country. The Patriarch of Constantinople is the spiritual head of all Orthodox Churches, but otherwise the Greek Church is self-governing, being administered by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece.

## ROYAL FAMILY OF GREECE

King Paul I, who succeeded his brother George II in 1947, is traditionally known as "King of the Hellenes". His wife is Queen Frederika. They have three children:

- (i) Crown Prince H.R.H. Prince Constantine, Duke of Sparta, born 1940.
- (ii) H.R.H. Princess Sophia, born 1938.
- (iii) H.R.H. Princess Irene, born 1942.

Prince Constantine is the equivalent of our "Prince of Wales" and will succeed to the Throne.

## SHIPPING

Greece depends on shipping for much of her prosperity. The Greek merchant fleet in January 1960 had 839 vessels of a total tonnage of

3,460,085 tons (excluding Greek-owned ships under foreign flags). In addition, the Royal Hellenic Navy has 63 vessels.

#### TOWNS OF GREECE

Total population of Greece and the islands is 7,600,000. The capital is Athens, which, including the seaport of Piraeus, has a population of 1,378,000. Other important towns, all of which are seaports, are:

SALONICA	217,000
PATRAS	109,000
VOLO	65,100

CAVALLA 44,000  
In Crete, important towns are:

HERAKLEION	53,000
CANEA	27,000
RETHYMNON	10,000

Among the Ionian Islands:  
CORFU 35,000  
ZANTE 13,000  
ARGOSTOLION 10,000

Among the Cyclades:  
In Syra  
HERMOUPOLIS 22,000  
In Lesbos:  
MYTILENE 32,000  
In Chios:  
CHIOS 27,000

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